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ACCENT

PEGGY BENNETT:

Blue Daughters

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LOUIS PAUWELS: Beginning

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CONTRIBUTORS

GEORGE ANTHONY has published a book of poems, *Toys in Blood* . . . JOSEPH WARREN BEACH, the noted critic and poet, is teaching at Harvard . . . PEGGY BENNETT, author of *The Varmints*, is at work on a second novel . . . BOBB DAVIS lives in New Orleans . . . WALLACE FOWLIE, of the University of Chicago, has a second novel, *Sun Suicide*, about to appear . . . F. L. OVERCARSH is in Europe this winter . . . LOUIS PAUWELS is one of France's most highly regarded young writers, author of a novel, *Saint-Quelqu'un*, and two novelettes . . . DELMORE SCHWARTZ will publish in 1950 a study of Eliot and a volume of poems . . . MORTIMER SLAIMAN lives in Cambridge, Mass. . . HARRY SYLVESTER, of Brewster, Mass., is best known as a novelist.

ACCENT

A QUARTERLY OF NEW LITERATURE

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PEGGY BENNETT:

Blue Daughters

Lulu was forty-eight and Mary was thirty. Lulu was Mary's mother.

But the nine months Mary had spent in that tough torso had made no maternal figure of Lulu. On the contrary, Lulu had left the one-month infant in the care of a Negro girl and gone forth on bandy legs to pound her way through New York days.

As Mary grew into girlhood, Lulu became her boyish chum. As Mary grew into womanhood, Lulu dwindled down through Mary's eyes until she was a sort of affectionate dwarf Mary mothered. Mary said, "Well, she's just — Lulu," with a faint wizened smile and a hasty light shrug as she stared abroad with her great pale blue eyes.

Yesterday Mary had five hundred fifty dollars in the bank. Then Lulu telephoned Mary at noon. She had a secret for Mary's ears alone, and wouldn't Katie Mulholland love to know it!

"Wouldn't she just love to, though?" rhapsodized Lulu. "Oh,

she'd blab it like it was something dirty. I know her. She's at the roots of more rumors, Mary, than you or me ever heard of. She'd cut off her left hind leg to spite me. I know her. Mean as a bitch."

There was a silence in the telephone. Then Lulu rasped anxiously, "You wouldn't let on as something happened, would you? I mean around Katie, if you just happened to bump into her somewheres."

"Lulu!" cried Mary, wounded and indignant. "What makes you say those things! Sometimes I think you say things like that on purpose to hurt me. Do you really believe I'd have any truck with that big — bum — that old — she-devil!"

Lulu smacked her gum with agitated gusto, enjoying the stepped-up tempo and the ardor of their speech, frowned fiercely in the telephone booth, and said, "Well, honey, I just get so keyed up and out of patience — you know how nervous I am — sometimes I don't think I can trust a living soul."

"It isn't as if I was just anybody," said Mary huskily. She sounded close to tears.

Lulu's gross face quivered. "I just read such terrible things about people in the newspapers," she lamented in her stentorian way. "They's so many stinkers in this world, Mary, you get where you don't even trust your next of kin."

There were flickering sounds in the telephone, like rain on the windows. Mary was weeping, feeling stale as a damp soda cracker, damp as the saltcellars in towns by the sea. She hurt beneath her breastbone, as if big muscles there ached.

With a spasm of guilty compassion, a flaring face, Lulu went to work at making amends.

"Now, honey baby, I didn't mean to sound thataway. If I couldn't trust you, who could I trust, now? No mother ever had a daughter like you, sweetsie. You're an angel. You're good as gold to me."

Mary mopped her damp face with a tiny bundle of handkerchief, blew her nose with a tiny scat.

Lulu was cheered and began to gloat again about the surprise in store for Katie Mulholland. She easily forgot her little theatrical presentations, though Mary remembered with cumbrous pity and resentment. Little scenes from the dramas of ancient Greeks, when Lulu's emotion might foam like peroxide, thus cleansing her. Mary, too often depressed to appreciate them — one more cross to bear in this storming urban world of barbarisms —, endured them with a feeling of hopelessness like the big soft muffled beat of a drum in some

Tschaikowsky symphony. (Sometimes she wept, in self-pity, when she heard a Tschaikowsky opus.)

Mary, pallid and wiser than her mother, said with wan warmth over the telephone wire, "Don't get into any trouble, Lulu, will you, for me?"

"Aw, don't you worry, my darling," barked Lulu.

"But I do," Mary murmured, holding the receiver against her breast and staring through the glass windows vacantly as she wondered what it would be like if Lulu were run over by a taxi, Mary left alone, an orphan, in the hostile city. "Huh? Huh?" said Lulu. When Mary did not respond, Lulu said, "Be seeing you, darling. Bye bye." Her forehead dewy with the fearful sweat, Mary started. "Bye, Lulu!" she yelped desperately.

They hung up the receivers and went their separate ways, Mary back to the high stool behind the cash register in the mirror-bathed bar, and Lulu tot tot tot across the street, down the sidewalk, and in a corner door to work behind the lunch counter.

Lulu always went to the drugstore at noon, to enthrone in the splendor of the telephone booth, surrounded by the monstrous privacy of New York crowds. The fermenting big drugstores gave her new breath, a new view with rainbow-stemmed toothbrushes in platoons, phalanxes of perfume bottles, translucent plastic toys, and festooned sundaes.

A couple of Manhattan miles away Mary sat in the mirrory mauve and grey bar where people came to buy pieces of the dreamy fabric of sleep. The dark womb heaving, coughing, sighing. "Poor Lulu," Mary sighed. "Don't she have the bad breaks."

In her clearer moments even Mary knew that Lulu was stupid. Those green glassy eyes in that clown-powdered, pink-rouged face and that loud tough suet voice told everyone, Lulu is stupid.

Perhaps her hormones, perhaps her genes, and perhaps her life as a pliable-mettled child. Something had not functioned properly. Now there was little use expecting poetry, or even machiavellian wiles, from her, but you could clap her on the back for the game old girl she was.

(People who knew the two, mother and daughter, made mouths, hisses of horror: "Who would ever have thought that old kettle could produce such a daughter. She seems to be a nice girl, too," they ruminated.)

But most of the time, in a daze to combat the noise of the mad

menagerie in the bar around her, Mary thought the topography of Lulu, those coarse and queer contours, unfortunate physical encumbrances, a masquerade. For there were poetry and machiavellian wiles in Lulu! Mary, who had suffered a life of failures with Lulu, knew it must be so. There was also parsimony of soul. And Mary knew this also.

Mary worried about the Katie Mulholland-Lulu feud, because of the pecuniary threat to Lulu, for Mary herself hungered for the salvation of the golden coin.

Katie Mulholland was some kind of fascist. Mary said emphatically to Lulu, "She belongs with those people who were following Adolf Hitler." Katie did everything mean in her power to make Lulu quit her job. She talked loudly about Lulu to the customers, who were usually good Joes, truckmen and the like. "Aw, don't pay no attention to her. She's batty as they come." And Katie vigorously chewed her gum, the little pink ribbon in the iron-rooted auburn hair wagging over her temples.

Lulu told Mary some of the things Katie had said to her. They were hard to believe in their crudity, but Lulu hardly had the imagination to create them of thin air, though she might exaggerate them. Katie passionately fought Lulu all day long, like Winged Victory, Minerva, Revolutionary France, or something like that.

Lulu could not understand why Katie hated her. Reluctantly Lulu had let Katie sing and slash her into inflammable emotionality. "I don't know what ails that woman!" she complained to Mary. "She finds fault with everything I do. She takes exception to everything I say. It's getting so I can't open my mouth."

In the warm summer evening, as prearranged, Lulu met Mary at the Cherry Blossom, a Hungarian kind of restaurant with dollar diners. It was seven o'clock, and daylight was still abroad. But the colors in the awnings were fading from red and green into dark and medium greys.

"Ed's going to meet us here," gushed Lulu, tasting the sweet triumph of possession here in front of the one person she longed always to impress with her worth, her Mary. Lulu folded her arms, elbows knobbed to table.

Mary's lips, if not actually smiling, seemed haunted by a smile. Bittersweet, tired but brave, she stripped the white soft gloves from her hands and sat with that misty mouth.

"How're the bar flies? Swarming thick as ever?" said Lulu, eagerly leaning forward, her short huge legs making big swimming movements under the table.

"Thicker than ever," said Mary wanly, tapping the table with the tiny book of paper matches from the ash tray. "How's your feud?"

"Ai!" spat Lulu. "She's a divil. I don't know what ails her!" Lulu became sullen and nervous, rearing her head and gazing wildly around the room.

Mary was still. She had eyes like great pale buttons, and they stared as sightlessly as those of the blind. They were a faded tint of cerulean, kin to water under her thin-plucked sandy brows. Her skin was like a tan paraffin; it had a waxy glow. She knew she was homely. As an adolescent she had crumpled her heart into waste paper over the fashion magazines, and even today she envied their masklike faces, the boyish figures, and the theatrical garb on their slick pages. She too was beautiful and desirable in her own most inner sanctuary, where the real Mary dwelt, an exile. But every minute, as she grew older, she felt some of that imaginary beauty and desire grow cold and dead.

Lulu puffed in silence and scrutinized her daughter's enigmatic face. "You're looking better," she interrupted.

"If I could only sleep nights," said Mary wanly, restlessly rubbing her brow with her small pale hands.

"Ed and I got something to tell you," continued Lulu, flourishing her cigarette ponderously, her green button eyes bright with glad tidings.

Mary was teased, and seemed to glow a little in her pale pulseless way. Perhaps they were going to take her on a journey, give her something, change her fate.

Ed came plodding in, a bulgy hairless man whose nude flesh looked orangish, clean, beneath the yellowy light blaring from the cafe's ceiling. "Hi, Lou," he said quietly.

He put his arm around Mary and hugged her gently around the ribs. She liked this strange violation tingling her skin. His arm was warm and strong.

Her mind was always making her feel false. Now it greedily betrayed her own Lulu. Mary wondered nervously, "Does Ed love ME? Would Ed like to have ME, instead of Lulu?" And it was a little delicious to feel desired by someone strange.

But Mary did not love Ed. Ed was too peculiar — plump and without hair. She wanted something less glabrous and more conven-

tional. It was bad enough to bear her mother's maiden name. It was bad enough to be an old maid. Convention was the golden word. "I must discourage him," she thought virtuously, "before we hurt Lulu."

The waiter with the calm thickbearded dogface and small, black, and beady eyes had been toadying to a stout woman with a black moustache and bluish, purplish, white hair set into a perfect formal pattern of rolls, sweeps, and rhinestone combs. As perfect as a wig in Marie Antoinette's day. It was sassy; it seemed to announce, "One hundred dollars and six hours in the making."

"Why do they do it?" Mary cried indignantly. "I see so many old women all made up like that!"

"Jews — " interpolated Lulu.

"Not necessarily," said Ed, perfunctorily.

The woman had a shrewd masculine air. A fat and amiable ruddy man in a suit of great black and white plaid, big rubies and black onyx on his fat hirsute fingers, lolled at her side, basking in the splendor.

Ed popped his delicate fingers and summoned the waiter forth. Lulu was proud to see that Ed was not to be "walked over" by anyone. She simpered over her brawny folded arms at Mary across the table.

Ed held out his cigarette, slowly poked it between his clean bare lips. Mary and Lulu watched the waiter strike a match and light the white, quivering, expectant little cigarette, which led its separate existence stuck out from the soft smooth flesh — feeding it flame with a little manual flourish done with conscious artistry. Remember the tip, the waiter's flourish seemed to warn them.

It was a warm galing spring evening, full of breeze eddies which made the paper napkins dance in ghostly bravura ballet, the awning flap gently like sails. A block and a half away the East River boiled by.

The evening was spent with talk of Ed, by Ed, and for Ed. Lulu folded her muscular arms repeatedly and leaned forward with bright eyes to catch his words of wisdom, then, breaking posture, sat up straight to approve them monotonously. "That's right, you tell em, Ed's right, listen to Ed . . ."

She urged him on like a baseball fan. "Yeah, tell Mary about that, Ed. I think it's just stunning." She shook a long worm ash off the cigarette into her plate, her lips puckering judiciously under her earnest frown. "Say, Ed, why don't you tell Mary about you and me?"

To this last urgent inquiry Ed responded, gazing enigmatically across the laden table at the startled, tremulous Mary, "How would

you like me for a father, Mary?" His soft low voice was casual. His eyes raked hers with expressionless boldness.

"So this is what Lulu meant," the hapless and overawed girl thought. She wondered frenziedly, "What is Ed's pose?" Lulu was frisking in her chair like an excited puppy. Ed, forty-one-year Ed, following Mary's horrified gaze, smiled damply on Lulu. "What cha think, Mary!" cried Lulu.

A large last chunk of meat was traveling slowly down Mary's lonely esophagus, hurting her as it went.

"Yes, what do you think, Mary?" echoed Ed, smiling with quiet oil.

Flustered, her hand groped among glasses, spoons, and ash trays like a lost creature. "Why, Ed, I think — that would be—well, all right!" she murmured huskily, chokily. "Why, it'd be swell!" she forced herself to cry desperately. And then she sat throbbing with anguish.

Through the rest of the guilty evening her brain thundered with loose troops of electrical phantasms. What had been transparent was umbra.

When the chicken paprika and the ice cream were down their working throats, flushed with vile coffee, Lulu told Mary that she was going home to bed with a headache.

Long ago Lulu and Mary had taken separate rooms in different neighborhoods because, as Lulu explained so augustly, "It wasn't good for a kid like Mary to have no private life. We useta quarrel. We don't quarrel no more, do we, Mary?"

Mary, smiling her sweet, brave, and famished smile for her unmotherly but fast-riveted crony, knew that Lulu was telling a broad lie but did not mind. She valued Lulu's pride in her own innocence and high mind.

Lulu trudged sturdily among the tables to the powder room. Ed sat strangely nervous as Mary stared past him with eyes blank as saucers. He said with difficulty and a nervous laugh, "There's only one Lulu." Mary looked at him incredulously. Was he making sport of Lulu?

"Lulu's a grand person," Mary said in a low bitter voice.

"Yes, yes, she certainly is," Ed said hastily, and then, in a sort of earthquakery, turned sideways in his chair and gazed wildly out of the window at passersby.

"He's just a big phony," Mary thought sadly. Everybody was a phony these days. It was like the common cold.

Lulu returned gustily. "Let's go, Jackson!" she said to Ed. On the sidewalk she turned and enfolded Mary. Mary kissed Lulu goodnight on the bulging though soft cheek and squeezed the big coarse mannish hands with a great spasm of pity.

Then Ed put his soft and pulpy, ephemeral hand forward. It lay like a stick of butter in Mary's own little paw.

Lulu, of course, went home with Ed for drinks and play in the fine bachelor flat.

Mary sighed as she watched them go. The short square bulks of their backs. Then she stiffened resolutely. "Well, life is too short for worrying," she murmured aloud. "Lulu is happy, anyway."

She laboriously climbed into the crosstown bus and came face to face with herself. As she sat nebulous in contemplation of her own life, the bus lurched across the blocks and avenues behind the spurt-ing automobiles and taxis.

She began to dream of late rescue by the tardy prince.

"Home" was a cubbyhole on a fourth story in a tenement. A place where she might be lonely in peace. She walked up three flights of stairs and opened her door on the blast of bottled heat, walked to the window and opened the sash, threw her raincoat and pocketbook on the narrow single bed.

It was only ten o'clock, so she settled with her stack of woman's magazines and steadily perused the stories. Pretty Vicky, harassed by the cold, sophisticated Elaine, had to choose between Drake, with his millions, and blithe footloose Tom. She read about quiet beautiful Noel, toast of continents, and her tragic marriage to the saturnine Nicholas, her eventual salvation in the arms of the young farmer, Angus Dunn. But for the grace of God, Mary was pretty Vicky and quiet Noel!

The movie magazine informed her that brave, tragic Joan Crawford had not lost her sense of humor. Tyrone Power might wander, but he always came home to his women. Alan Ladd had been washed by hell's fire, but credited it for his newborn character. Elizabeth Taylor was a darling, and Greer Garson was not a hasbeen.

The movie magazine began to slow her brain with sludge and sickness. She threw it in the wastepaper basket, feeling bewildered and disappointed with a life of such inequalities.

She turned on her tiny plastic radio for the mystery serials and the program of Victor Herbert and Sigmund Romberg melodies. She sewed a new hem in her old black satin slip while she listened.

At twelve-thirty someone rang her bell. In dismay she listened until it sharply spurted again. Lulu, in trouble? Some drunken sailor seeking port? Some mawkish idiot come to pounce and rape? She remembered the big Negro who stared muttering at her bosom. The two slimy young Italo-Americans leering at her.

She pressed the buzzer, cautiously opened her door, and tiptoed swiftly across the hall to the stair rail.

At first there was nothing to be seen in the dim and smoky depth.

Terrified, she tried to shout an inquiry, but the words stuck in her throat. Her mouth seemed dry, her lips paperish. When voices had shouted up in the past they had seemed muffled, as from a deep jar. Mail man, ice man, none of these tonight.

Then she saw the silent hand descend with perfect speed upon the bottom railing, deep below. A chill ran fleet along her spine. She waited without breath. The tiny, perfect hand rested motionlessly on that first slanted railing. Uncanny as a blonde tarantula, it sat, poised and spectral. Like a superstition, it awaited its own power.

Paralyzed she waited, afraid to identify herself, even by stirring for whatever it was that lay in wait for her.

She had visions of a monster blocking the lower passageway like an octopus and crawling, close to the wall, with a dreadful motion, up the successive flights of stairs. Slithering. With a glazed eye she motionlessly watched both the hand and the stairs below for the slightest shadowy movement.

Finally, after what seemed about fortyfive minutes to her, the young man who lived one floor below her came home, and Mary, faint with relief, shuddering into calm, called out precisely, "Who is that downstairs, please?"

"Oh, some old rummy," he threw off, glancing up. His cheeks looked rouged.

"Thank you," she said dispassionately and disappeared.

Mary doublelocked the door to her room and settled in bed with magazines and a large wedge of soft cake, which tasted like powdered sugar and oleomargarine, and sponge rubber, to calm her hopping nerves. Meanwhile her alerted brain was rapidly making plans for her, in case an emergency ever came her way. She could dart up to the roof and run across the city block on roofs, like an Irish revolutionary. She could bang the door of her room, lock it, pile bureau, chair, and bed against it — but if it were gangsters they could shoot through with deadly spray of tommyguns. Gangsters were scary

people, they liked to see the innocent suffer. She could climb out onto the open fire escape, where some midnight policeman or altruistic passerby might see her.

About half an hour had passed when she began to hear the ominous dragging mounting the stairs, and her shallow calm fled.

She steeled herself and glanced nervously, yearningly at the lock. She had never understood its workings. It was only cold metal and grease, so she did not trust it. She had heard how some talented men could feel a lock's nerves with bare fingers and coax it open. A diabolical mind could use this lock knowledge in sinister ways.

Thus her imagination brought her only horror. Still as a mouse she sat and waited, longing for the dragging to pass her by.

Scrape, scratch, slough, and drag, something came down the little hall to the very foot of her door, where, unaccountably, it stopped. Her heart pounded so loud she was sure it could be heard outside.

There was heavy breathing right outside the door, as if lions and tigers circulated there with hungry breath.

She was powerless to move, utterly unprepared for what came.

"Open that door."

And the silence rang.

"You dirty bum. OPEN THAT DOOR."

A tight bloodcurdling little yell. A key came rattling and slithering into the keyhole, where it was plied in vain.

Mary had shrunk until each of her internal organs was an aching, roast peanut. Her brain was a monotonous agony as it sought release. She looked at the window and the top of the fire escape railing. Could she make it in time, before the lock or the wood gave way? Her dreamy body lay in a spell.

Whatever it was that had bawled in that sexless, inhuman way, began to bam on the door with the hands or claws and then to kick it with metallic-sounding feet.

"Open this door. You ungrateful wretch. OPEN THIS DOOR.

"O, I'd just like to get my hands on you, just once! O, after all I did for you! You whore! If I could just once!

"Why, I took you in after your husband divorced you. You didn't even have a radio. Not even a broom! When you was sick I bathed you like you was a baby. Everybody knows your husband divorced you for drunkenness!

"For two years, for two years, I supported you. I left you a dollar every day, right there on the table to buy you rum. And you treat

me this way! O, you little two-bit whore! You owe me five hundred and fifty dollars!"

Bam, bam, bam!

"Yes, you do! You most certainly do!"

Bam, bam, bam!

"If you don't open this door, you little fool, I'll just tear it down! I'll get me a pick ax! I'll break that lock to pieces!"

Bam, bam! Crash! Crack! "OPEN THAT DOOR." Bang. Bam.

Somehow there came about a long silence, like snow singing on the out-of-doors. Mary was extraordinarily dizzy. She rose and swayed quietly. The root muscles of her eyes ached as if her eyes were going to twiddle backwards, leaving only white blanks to view.

Outside there was a bumping, thumping, and swishing about on the floor. Finally again that little voice was raised in a tight yell. It grew fainter and fainter.

"YER GONNER SUFFER FOR THIS. O, YES, YER GONNER SUFFER.

"Like I been suffering. THREE YEARS FROM NOW YER GONNER BE LYING OUT ON THE COLD FLOOR. NAKED. WITH NO COVER. WITH NOT EVEN A PILLOW. AND DO YOU THINK I'LL HAVE PITY ON YOU?

"HA HA! HA!

"NOT ONE TEAR WILL I SHED OVER YOU.

"O, no. I won't have pity on you.

"Yer gonner get yours, lady. You wait and see."

Soon, from the invisible, there came a faint sputtery, rhythmic snore.

With masticated, raw nerves, Mary ran to the window and desperately gazed out. "I've waited long enough," she thought wildly.

Impulsively, defiantly, she climbed out onto the dark fire escape grating. Then she peered down terrorstricken on dark bobbling heads and shapes.

Quiet drunks went slumping by as directionlessly as windmills, pinwheels. Dark yellow and orange taxis scudded around the corners and zoomed down the avenue like night racers. A few steady, sober people walked under the grating, the respectable. A noisy drunk tried to fight a bus. He stood in front of it, haranguing, for about fifteen minutes and then wobbled from in front of it while people shouted at him.

Finally a silent buoy cop came walking by beneath her. "Police!"

she cried. Five or six of these tiny and thin gull cries from her starving throat. Then he looked up at her with an inscrutable, pale, tiny face, made her a reassuring motion with his microscopic gloved hand, and entered the hallway downstairs.

She scrambled like some flamboyant tomboy to press the buzzer. When she heard his weighted foot encroaching on the stairs she opened the door swiftly and peered out, wonderfully emboldened.

An old woman lay on her back on the floor, legs stretched out stiff in front of her and belly steep, an arm thrown up against her eyes.

"Who you got here?" said the policeman brusquely.

"I don't know," whispered Mary, shakily.

She began to sob helplessly, her underlip making wild little bobbles she could no longer control. She made her speech plain with much labor, as her voice kept dying out and coming back in hoarse blasts. She felt despicable. "She's been bang—she's been beating — on my door — and yelling — for hours and hours!"

The policeman craned his neck in a cursory "examination of the premises." He gazed heavenward, a queerness passing on his immaculate young face as he considered the possibility of the old woman's residence in this building.

"Ever seen her likes before?" he said curtly.

"Oh, no," Mary protested faintly.

"You have a phone?" he flung at her over his dense young shoulder.

"O, no," she repeated stupidly, her hand pulling the skin of her downy throat to express uselessness.

"Okay," he said finally. "It's all right. Go to bed, lady. I'll have some of the boys up shortly to remove this old bag." He rapidly ran down the stairs with an evenly pebbled leg motion.

Mary waited up until they came again. She listened behind the cracked door to their grunts and terse low comments as their cooperative effort raised the unconscious one. She looked after their retreating forms as they carried the heavy bloated form down the long narrow stairways.

Their stalwart backs and calm measured baritones had reassured her. She doublechecked the door, put the bureau against it to stump fate, turned out the little bedlamp, and fell exhausted into the bed trough, where she twisted and turned, the baleful red reflection of the neon sign on the drugstore across the street blinking on and off on

her walls. She dozed and woke when dawn was a faint dilution of the dark. She dozed and woke again when dawn was luminous in the window. Gratefully she then slept.

She woke at nine to a hurried little knock at the door. A gaunt and ghostly girl stood outside, her dark eyes flashing feverishly, averted.

"I came to offer apologies for my mother's behavior last night," she muttered queerly. "I live upstairs over you, you know," she added. She kept putting one foot out in the opposite direction, as if she were ready to depart any instant. "My mother must have thought your room was mine. She was so drunk, poor old thing, you know."

Speechlessly Mary pulled the fold of her kimono tighter around her body.

The girl nodded idiotically, twisting her fingers in the blouse bow over her breastbone. "Yes, I would have come down," she continued listlessly, "but, well —" She hesitated and then added smoothly, "But I was so tired. So very tired."

Then, in complete contradiction of her expressionlessness, she leaned her head against the outer wall and began to sob quietly.

"Oh," said Mary, terribly stirred at the sight of such defeat. "Oh, don't do that *there!* Come on in, come inside and sit down for a minute."

The girl sat hunched over in the chair, her thin shoulders working with sobs, her spine a knotty centipede under the pulled white rayon blouse. Her bare face seemed both lavender and pink, bumpy, screened with fluid tears running down the promontories of nose, lip, and cheek.

Because the girl was homely, Mary found her pretty. There was an endearing awkwardness, delicacy of gesture, an eurhythmy of the whole. It was rarely Mary saw another girl's fathoms.

"I should have come down and got her," the girl croaked, and gasped so loudly she almost hiccuped. Her hands hung limp on her kneecaps. "I know I should have. It's just that she's so terrible. She follows me everywhere I go. I have to move from every place. She comes and torments me and bangs and shouts and writes terrible things all over my walls.

"She's my mother, you know."

"That's awful," murmured Mary. "Here, use my Kleenex."

"My father divorced her, she stayed so drunk. When she was sick I bathed her like a baby. She left me to live with an old souse when I was nineteen. When he kicked her out, I took her in. For two

years I supported her. I left her a dollar every day on the table so she could buy her rum. Then I had to leave her. She was driving me mad. She repeated everything I said to her like she was me.

"She'd fight me like a cat. She even threw my little Swiss clock at me. It broke into little pieces. It was a nice clock. A boy gave it to me for my birthday. She was jealous of him, so she used to follow him to work and pester him all morning. I don't know what happened to him. He quit calling up.

"Now she follows me. How she found out I was here, I don't know. She must have called the place I work. Maybe my landlady at the other place told her. My landlady seemed to blame me for the condition she'd find my mother in.

"I try to tell people about it, but they won't listen. They don't believe you when you say, My mother's a bum, a drunken devil. They say, Why don't you try to take better care of the old lady? Why don't you take her to a good doctor? If they only knew all I've tried. They think you're unnatural when you try to get rid of her. I got fired one day last month from my job in a big department store. My mother came and told them lies about me. The manager said he couldn't trust anyone like me to wait on customers. He said I was crazy to treat my old mother the way I did."

The girl's stamina had given out. She sat quietly and involuntarily sobbing. Her mind seemed to have blanked out, for she gazed around her with frightened eyes, lost in the labyrinth of her own words. "O, God," she groaned, "I shouldn't have said anything to you about all this. You don't want to know anything about all this. Why should I bother you?"

"You poor thing," Mary said weakly. "You mustn't feel like that." Her fingers fidgeted a little at the puffed shoulder of the girl's sleeve, but at once withdrew like frightened mice to the back of the chair.

"Well," said the girl bitterly, her eyes glittering as she rose from the chair, "I'll take off before I do more mischief. You're good, but nobody can help me. You've probably got troubles a hundred times worse. I'm just a poor sap, that's all." Her face grew hard. "Sorry I dragged you into all this. I hope it won't happen again."

"Awww," said Mary distressed.

This touched the girl on a tender spot. She turned toward Mary with a buttery ghost of a smile. "Now, now!" she said. "Forget it, kid!"

It was kind blasphemy. Mary smiled timidly. "I hope everything will be all right."

"Oh, sure it will!" the girl boshed shortly. "So long." She went down the stairs with a sluggish gait, a slim, long figure in a shiny severe black tailored suit. Mary thought her heroic.

A little while later Mary heard a dragging on the steps. She peeked out as the old woman's head came bobbing into view through the railings. The old woman was weeping noisily, "Ooh hoo hoo hoo." Mary quietly closed the door and locked it. The old woman passed by and entered on the next flight of stairs.

When Mary left her room to go to work at eleven, she could hear the old woman fluttering like a bird caught in an interior, beating futilely at her daughter's door.

"Why didn't the police put her in some hospital ward for alcoholics?" Mary wondered irritably. "Why don't the police try to clean up New York?"

She went down the stair hatches moodily, feeling that nothing was incorruptible, that the world was a hopeless dump.

Mary had a terrible headache this morning, and as she squinted along the shiny streets under the pursuit of the daystar, she thought her head would drop off her straining neck. She ate two aspirin tablets as she washed down her waffles in the lunchroom. "Christ, what a day," she sighed bleakly, leaning her head against a hand and staring lusterlessly out the window at sidewalk pandemonium.

She got to work fifteen minutes late, her head full of muffled thunder. As she distributed the new bills and coin in the cleaned-out cash register, the girl in the back office summoned her to the telephone. Yawning, Mary slouched through the swinging door and seized the receiver.

It was Lulu. Her voice was staccato. "I got to see you, Mary," she stuttered. "I got something terrible to tell you. Meet me tonight at Oglethorpe's."

Mary half slept on her high stool. The afternoon slipped by, thundering, buzzing, and whispering in the deteriorated nautilus of her ears. When finally the sixty ticking minutes between six and seven had elapsed and the night cashier, a nightblooming cereus of a girl, had come, Mary eased her sore hidebound muscles off the wooden seat, feeling so tired she could hardly locomote. She moved like a slug to the back closet for her little jacket and sloughed out the side entrance into the screaming night.

Oglethorpe's was crowded with the many-faced, brilliant-frocked,

and bristly-suited, giant amoeba. Lulu was waiting at a side table. Mary slung opposite her into a chair and gazed wanly at the waiter, who handed her a menu.

Other customers, eyeing each other in the cheap restaurant, could see an aging woman with pale pudgy face, round blue eyes half closed with weariness, and the lost beauty of some forgotten movie queen, sitting with an old freak of thick torso, absurdly tight short dress, and a big foolish face as startling as the puckish aged face of a street urchin.

The older woman seemed in nervous haste, oblivious to all that went on around her. She took a letter from her bulky flat-chested dress bosom and thrust it quickly to the thirty-year-old girl. Then she began smoking with tiny quick puffs, almost savage in nervous passion.

The girl, also nervous, biting her lips, probably bored by her mother (one man reasoned airily), hampered, feeling foolish herself, feeling dilapidated and made gross, was trying to answer sensibly. She was close to tears that could not flow having once flowed until all was hard and dry. Her face was the picture of sadness, dry and unrelieved.

"It's the old story, Mary darling," Lulu said hoarsely.

To Lulu "the old story" was the one in which a man leaves his woman for other parts.

To Mary "the old story" was that Lulu had amassed troubles again, that the props and crutches had been knocked down again, that the world had brought them misery again, that Ed had done the inevitable.

"I got to follow him this time, Mary. This time it's the last time for me. He's the berries, Mary, but he's all tangled up in his mind. I can't let him walk out on our life together like that. I'm good for him, Mary. You know how I've mothered the boy."

"Sure," Mary said. Pity sponsored another white lie, as Mary contemplated idiocy.

"He's doing me dirt, Mary," croaked Lulu, her eyes filling with liquid diamonds. "He can't do that to me. He needs me. I got a strong shoulder. When people poke fun at him because he ain't got no hair, I protect him. It don't make no difference to me he's got no hair. It's his soul I look at."

Mary patted Lulu's plump scarred hand.

Lulu finished her tears and loudly honked her nose into the man's handkerchief she pulled out of her pocket.

"Mary, I got to have money. You got to lend me some money. I'll need at least two or three hundred dollars, Mary. No, more than that. I'll need, say, five hundred at least. Could you let me have five hundred dollars, Mary? Mary, it's our only chance. It's life or death, it's the end or the beginning."

Mary looked at the earnest old plump face with such sorrow that her own face felt on the point of breaking up into pieces of some alien plaster. "You know you can have anything I've got," she said huskily, and sat watching herself sign a check, the ghost watching the corpse.

Thus her proud money disappeared as by sorcery. It was indeed the old story.

A long walk on lighted streets and avenues kept her from thinking too poignantly of her fled money. She kept thinking, "Wiped out," but the business of walking to the tune of red lights across the heads of thoroughfares dispersed the accruing pain with a certain adequacy.

"I should have bought that fur coat I saw in Macy's window," she whispered at one point. "At least I'd have that to show."

And she kept thinking, "How lonely I am!"

As she crossed the street toward "her" tenement, she looked up at the windows in mute appeal. Her own was dark and cheerless. There could be nothing in her room to mute her woe.

A light was on in the top story window, above her own dark hostile one. The girl upstairs was at home.

Mary felt so wretched, alone, that she wondered as she slowly mounted the stairs if she dared visit her spirit's sister. "No," she slowly decided as she hesitated at the foot of the stairs leading on past her own room, "that would be presumptuous."

She flicked the lights on, dropped her jacket and purse on the bed, and sat down beside them, feeling stir-crazy. She rose and paced to and fro, the closed window forgotten. She primped her hair slightly, her face looking at her from the mirror, and she restlessly twirled on her heels in the middle of the room.

Suddenly she was brave with desperation. She ran a comb through her hair and stole forth through the door and up the steep stairs. She pretended that she was coming in the guise of a benevolent bishop.

She rapped and the girl stood in the open door.

"Hello," Mary said with a falsely bright smile. "How are you feeling this evening? I came to see how you are. Did you see your mother? She was here this morning as I was leaving for work."

"I know," the girl said wearily, as she swung the door open wider and pressed her thin palm to her forehead. "Look what she wrote on the door." She moved to one side to let Mary scrutinize the big odd tablet. The maniacal scrawl of obscenities and accusations was like lead tatters all over the glossy painted surface.

Mary read it gravely. "You poor thing," she said pityingly.

The girl looked at her a little sulkily, standing with her ankles crossed, one foot flat and the other toeing the floor. Pity from pale corpses of people has a sardonic air. "Will you come in?" she said idly, shrugging.

Mary sat on the side of the jangling bed and heaved a damp sigh. "I had something bad happen to me today, too," she said miserably. "My mother borrowed all my money from me, and she's leaving town tomorrow morning to chase down a man who doesn't want to see her anymore. Isn't that a swell story? I think it's just dandy!"

"No kidding," the other girl had interrupted, sitting bolt upright. "Tell me all about it."

"Well," Mary began, accepting a chocolate-covered cherry from the little box the girl offered her, "my mother isn't like yours exactly, but she's got no common sense at all. She falls for the biggest phonies you ever saw . . ."

It was half past midnight when Mary felt the brake her compulsive conscience used on her to limit visits to polite segments of time. Reluctantly she arose.

"O, have you seen 'The Seventh Veil?'" she added. "I hear it's just wonderful. James Mason, you know. All about psychology, and it's got that wonderful Rachmaninoff concerto in it, the one they made that popular song out of."

"Yeah, I know," the other girl said, sparkling. She sat up in the middle of her bed, holding a knee in her arms. "No, I haven't been to many movies in the last few years, but I'd like to see that one. Where is it? You know?"

"Yes. It's on right near where I work. How about meeting me after work tomorrow, and we can see it together. If you'd like to."

"That would be grand," the other girl crowed.

"Okay, then," Mary called from the doorway. "I'd better get to bed and you, you quit worrying."

They exchanged a grateful glow, like aluminum surfaces, and with a busy head Mary went down one flight of stairs.

WALLACE FOWLIE:

Eluard's Doctrine of Love

I

In February of 1917, Max Ernst, a German artilleryman, was engaged in bombarding, at the distance of a kilometer, a trench in which Paul Eluard, a French infantry soldier, was standing guard. Three years later, Max Ernst, the surrealist painter, and Paul Eluard, the surrealist poet, were friends in Paris, engaged in a movement which for them went far beyond aesthetic doctrine and criteria. It was taking on for them the form and the potentiality of the total emancipation of man.

It seemed for a moment, at least in the early part of its history, that surrealism was obliterating the solitude of the artist, that special kind of solitude which is the most important characteristic of the modern artist. True poetry for the surrealists was seen to be a part of every force which was working for the liberation of man. The poet was no longer the inspired man; he was the one who inspires. And because he is involved in the life of everyman, in the common life, his art seeks to reduce the differences which exist between men. The most exultant claim which the surrealists made for poetry is this absolute force it possesses for purifying man. Eluard and the other surrealist poets often repeated Lautréamont's statement that poetry must be made by all and not by one man. If surrealism is, according to one of its major propositions, an instrument of knowledge, it must work to reveal the profoundest conscience of man. Knowledge of self will lead to knowledge of all men and from there to the union of all men.

If we say that the greatest fear of man is that of losing his freedom, we may say the same thing about poetry. Through its long history, which appears to be quite as long as the history of man himself, poetry has always trembled at not possessing sufficient freedom, at having to give up some precious part of itself to the institutions of man: to religion, to politics, to morality. Poetry fights for its purity as man fights for his freedom, and both are usually degraded. The history of poetry (and we might say the same thing about the history of man) is so exclusively the history of its degradations, when it was made the accomplice in very subtly-arranged compromises, that we hardly know

what poetry, in the pure state, is. Poetry has been allowed to exist only when it would renounce or enslave some part of its being. — We will let you sing, it was told, only if you sing such and such a subject and only if you sing it in a specific way.

The enslavement of poetry parallels the enslavement of man. Its history might be written in terms of the gains and losses of man's freedom. It embraces so generously the problems of man that it is impossible to separate them, that we cannot speak of one without speaking of the other. It has often occurred to me in reading surrealist texts that surrealism considers the history of man as if it were a long sleep filled with the phantom-like movements and patterns created by the characters of a myth. At the beginning of time, as soon as man felt himself a being distinct from the universe, his conscience was formed, and the main activity of man's conscience has been the engineering of his myths. In his myths, he accomplished the universe, by returning to it and by seeking to establish his relationship to it. Man's poetry is a very obscure and very incomplete search for precisely this knowledge of what his relationship to the universe really is.

But poetry may not be considered a history or a myth or the history of a myth. The only thing we can feel certain about poetry — and to this the experiment of surrealism has made an illuminating and reassuring contribution — is that its essence has something to do with the present. It has something to do with the revelation of the eternal present. Poetry must recapitulate that feeling of oneness, that reality of the ego which was the birth of man's conscience at the beginning of time. Poetry is a kind of explosion of that ego, a release of the ego in its way back to the universe. Like every explosion, poetry takes place after a period of compression and repression when disparate elements can no longer cohabit together, when they must break asunder and return to their primitive sources, as fire returns to the air. This image may help us to understand the surrealist belief that poetry is born from the destruction of principles, of superstitious rule and artistic prejudice. The surrealists called for the suicide of art and the renascence of poetry in the same way that they called for the demolition of social and political barriers and the emancipation of man.

The surrealist poets: Breton, Eluard, Tzara, Soupault, continued the tradition of the *voyants* of the XIXth century. In the wake of Baudelaire, Rimbaud and Mallarmé, poetry continues to be for them the effort to find a lost language. The image or the metaphor is the result of a certain kind of chemistry. In symbolism, the chemistry was

too conscious of its means and ends. Surrealism tried to go beyond the elaborate consciousness of symbolism to the very source of poetic imagination, to the very sleep in which the myths of man are preserved.

The miracle of poetry or the wonder of its history is, I suppose, its uselessness, its total lack of value. In the light of certain theories of history where man is characterized by an economic struggle for survival, the persistence of poetry is a difficult fact to account for. Poetry is the history of man's disinterestedness. Among all the occupations of man, which have no value or use in a material sense, the art of poetry is the most impressive. And he comes to it, usually at the end of adolescence, just at a time when he might well be considering more practical matters. Most boys from fourteen to eighteen spend a good deal of time dreaming and day-dreaming. A dream, however, is not a poem. These boys become poets from eighteen to twenty-two, if they convert their dreams into images. It has been said that it is no proof that a man is a poet if he writes poems at twenty. The proof is if he writes them at thirty and at fifty. The period of images, which is the period of poetry, may be succeeded by a period of thought. The poet may become critic or philosopher. The philosopher is an old poet whose communication is no longer made by use of images. The engagement of thought is one of the surest means of defeating the anguish of solitude. The limitless solitude of Baudelaire, for example, was never defeated by his activity of poet. The reason for this has perhaps something to do with the nature of the image itself.

I feel there is some connection between the limitless solitude of the poet and the magical properties of the image which are, in another sense, limitless. In this effort to define the image, I am thinking particularly of certain emphases which the surrealists gave to its character. In the poetic images, everything is comparable to everything else: evening may be spread out against the sky, as Eliot says, like a patient etherized upon a table. In the image everything finds an echo and a resemblance. It may be defined by its power of becoming and discovering, by its limitlessness. It contains both resemblances and oppositions, and illustrates what Baudelaire called in his *Spleen de Paris*: the logic of the absurd (*la logique de l'Absurde*).

As the dreamer preceded the poet, so the dream precedes the poem. Behind every poem exists a vision which is dead and consumed. A dream sensitizes the universe, but a poem desensitizes it and permits man to see a different world, or to see the same world differently. The greatest privilege which the artist enjoys, and we might say it is his

only privilege, is that of being himself and of being anyone else he wishes to be. The poet's means of exercising this privilege is the creation of an image. The image has the same compulsion for the poet that color has for the painter and that three-dimensional form has for the sculptor. When the surrealist painters undertook to illustrate the surrealist poets, they made no attempt to describe the images of the poems; they created further images which serve to enlarge the meaning of the verbal images. This process may be studied in Picasso's drawings for Max Jacob (*Le Siège de Jérusalem*), in the drawings of Ernst for Breton's *Chateau étoilé*, in Tanguy's illustrations for Péret (*Dormir dormir dans les pierres*) in Marcoussis' illustrations for *Alcools* of Apollinaire, in Dali's pictures for Lautréamont, and in many other collaborative works.

An image is a pure creation of the mind. No surrealist was ever able to create, as he would have liked to, a purely spontaneous image, whose nature was entirely private and oneiric. The memory of each one of them was so densely crowded with images from the romantic poets and others, that their images are often traceable. But their images are recognizably surrealist in their quality of precipitates. They are more diaphanous and imponderable than the images of other poets. Their aim is to avoid the danger of using the image to communicate some point. The image must not be useful; it must be innocent. Surrealist art must be stripped of rhetoric: it must never seek to prove anything. The great common error which the surrealists never ceased attacking was the belief that language was created in order to help men in their relationships with one another. This was an aberration, for André Breton. The highest goal of language, for which it was created, was the attainment to a disinterested purity. So, poetry is something other than language. It is the deviation from ordinary human speech, a deviation in which words are juxtaposed and pressed against one another in unusual combinations. If ordinary language is the communication of what is thinkable with what is thinkable, poetry is the communication of what is thinkable with what is unthinkable.

In the creation of romantic poetry, the initiative was always taken by the poet's sentiment and feeling. Then the words were found to correspond to or to translate the sentiment. In surrealist poetry the initiative is left to the words which then embark upon an extraordinary adventure of discovering the sensation or the dream or the obscure experience of the poet. In romantic art, sentiments register and engender words. In surrealist art, words, the most innocent ones which

form with the minimum of premeditation, engender and register the sensations and the experiences of the poet. So, it might be said that the poet's words, and the images which magically come together in his words, construct the poet. He is made out of his words. There is no such thing literally as immediate poetry or the spontaneous creation of a poem, but there is a species of passivity and of submission by which the poet is worked upon, which, beyond any doubt, plays an important part in the creation of a poem.

II

Modern poetry has been obsessed by a search for purity. During eighty years this obsession has been constantly expressed in such poems as *L'Invitation au Voyage* of Baudelaire, *Hérodiade* of Mallarmé and in all of his writings for that matter, in *Fragments de Narcisse* and *La Jeune Parque* of Valéry. These poems, which are among the finest poetic achievements of our age, have led the art of poetry almost to a mortal extremity where its very attainment to purity seems equivalent to self-annihilation. In all of these poems, the purity of the formal expression is inextricably allied with the theme of the absence of love. The figure of Narcissus, of self-love, of evasion of love in the ordinary sense, has settled down over the poets' obsession for purity and justified it by serving as its solitary and deepened myth. André Gide, in his early books especially, exalted the thirst for love and depreciated its satisfaction. Narcissus replaced Eros as god for poets. The art of poetry became equivalent to the evasion of life, the evasion of living by assuming the ordinary responsibilities. Love was not celebrated as much as the fear of love. The poet would dare to fall in love only with the phantom of an unknown woman met in his dreams. This is the subject of Verlaine's *Rêve Familier*:

Je fais souvent ce rêve étrange et pénétrant
D'une femme inconnue et que j'aime et qui m'aime.

The solitude of the genius was more firmly barricaded than ever, and his poetry was reproached for its hermeticism, for its purificatory ideal which had driven out all the familiar stories and sensations. Rimbaud was admired as the poet-magician, the poet-chemist, and not as the poet-lover. The last of the great love poets was Baudelaire, but his conception of love had been so tragic and anguished, that he had perhaps been more responsible than anyone else for the poets' abandonment of love.

The surrealist revolution, when it first broke out in its eloquent statements and histrionic behavior, called for total liberty in all human activities, including the activity of love. At the beginning, this freedom of love, in the surrealist sense, seemed to be fairly synonymous with the freedom for license or licentiousness. Love was an experiment with unusual sensations. Rimbaud's celebrated phrase: "the derangement of the senses," was easily interpreted as being an encouragement to the practice of perverted forms of love. The problem of love in the lives of Lautréamont and Rimbaud, a problem which I should like to say will always remain obscure and indecipherable but which, if we knew more about it and if we understood more deeply the meaning of love, would appear more sane and universal than many now believe, seemed to justify waywardness and experimentation in love. But this initial intoxication with freedom in love never developed to any degree within the ranks of the surrealists.

The two leaders especially, Breton and Eluard, due perhaps to the very freedom they felt about such problems, discovered in the experience and the meaning of love a lesson of purity quite opposed to the purity of love's absence. They discovered (or rediscovered) the pure love of woman and have sung of this love as ecstatically and vibrantly as any Ronsard. Their very intoxication with liberty seems to find an outlet in their love of woman, in their joy over this love. The secrets of the human spirit were revealed to the surrealists, one after the other in accordance with the surrealist process of free association, of spontaneous and involuntary revelation. Their concept of woman seems to spring from the deepest part of their subconscious and to rise up to their consciousness with a primitive and almost sacred insistence. It would not be exaggerated to say that the surrealists have contributed to a rehabilitation in literature of the rôle of woman as the fleshly and spiritual partner of man.

Love, even when it is treated negatively as a force *in absentia*, is the essential theme of all poetry and all literature . . . Love is at the same time, paradoxically, our surest way of escaping from the world and our profoundest way of knowing the world. Paul Eluard is perhaps the most eminent among the surrealists, as D. H. Lawrence is perhaps the most eminent modern writer outside the ranks of the surrealists, who have maintained an extraordinary and lofty awareness of this truth. They both knew that behind the multiple hyperboles and absurdities of love, behind the delirious profusions of love, it is the one force in man capable of breaking through the iron gates of language and reason: the two obstacles to love which have been inherited from

man's age-old fear of love and its falsely-named debilitating power.

I thought for a long time that Eluard's particular conception of love was comparable to the system of chivalric love, to something quite similar to courtly love of the early romances of the troubadours, to the *dolce stil nuovo* of Guinizelli and Cavalcanti, where man lives in an idolatrous submission to his lady. There are moments in his poetry when this comparison might justifiably be made. But on the whole, I now see his conception of love possessing a somewhat different emphasis. Woman is quite often absent from his poetry, but his love for her has made practically impossible the kind of solitude which is so characteristic of previous poets. The experience of love has finally dominated the experience of solitude, or has made out of the literal experience of solitariness another kind of possession. The eternal presentness of love is the new experience which Eluard explores in his verse.

III

It would almost seem that his volume of 1926, *Capitale de la Douleur*, is a new approach to the doctrine of love, a new erotology, one in which love is reconsidered as the great cosmic drama for man and where the particular rôle of woman is accorded a new preeminence.

Eluard's thought plays with the reality of love as if it were the poet's magnet. He moves toward it and then moves away. Although his amorous ecstasy is always severe and illuminated, one feels that love itself is an experience which has taken place at a great distance from the earth and beyond the limits of time, in some dark abyss. Love is the experience greater than man himself which he records and reproduces. It is older than he and more rigorously solitary than he is. It is also that experience in the midst of which man is unable to rest or establish himself with respect to space and time. Love is so perfectly composed of desire and despair that it is always in motion. Man is unable to fix himself within any part of it. He lives and grows and changes in love. And poetry is his metaphysical book on love, his guide book perhaps, the *summa* of all his questions and answers. Love is the supreme experience where the flesh and the spirit cease contradicting one another, and this is the exact phrasing which Breton used in defining surrealism in his first manifesto. After all the poems on the obsession of purity, *Capitale de la Douleur* comes as a book on the obsession of love in which man is portrayed as being both tragically and spiritually dependent on love.

The poem, *Première du Monde* (p. 101), is dedicated to Pablo Pi-

casso, and contains in its images, as many canvases of Picasso do in their lines, the secret of woman, of the first woman, and the secret place she holds in the universe.

Captive de la plaine, agonisante folle,
La lumière sur toi se cache, vois le ciel:
Il a fermé les yeux pour s'en prendre à ton rêve,
Il a fermé ta robe pour briser tes chaînes.

In the first of the five stanzas, the images of the plain and of madness describe the unlimited power of woman and the strange uniqueness of her vision as contrasted with that of man. Light, which is a usual image to describe the infinite, is hidden on woman, and the sky itself is conceived of as closing its eyes in order to attack her dreams. The sky closes her dress in order to break her chains. This is her myth: she is not dependent on the light of the sky because she has it within her. She is the being who is uniquely free. Man looks at the universe and can see only a woman.

Devant les roues toutes nouées
Un éventail rit aux éclats.
Dans les traîtres filets de l'herbe
Les routes perdent leur reflet.

The second stanza, with its startling juxtaposition of wheels and a fan, describes woman as the circumference and the womb and the sex of the world. The tied-together wheels, which bear the weight of the world and propel it through its destiny, designate the physical responsibility and function of woman. But the laughing fan, the other symbolic circle of woman's power, is the object of her charm and seductiveness, the simple lure by which she accomplishes the rotation of the world. So, woman is both principle (the world's wheel) and every particularity of the principle. In the same stanza the image of the grass where roads lose their reflections and their character, describes the drama of man and woman. She is the grass (as she was first the plain and the limitless light of the sky) and he is the road which first cuts across the grass, only to be lost in the new growth, covered and absorbed by woman's principle of eternity. Man loses his original form and personality in the experience of love. Woman is, and man is always trying to be.

By comparison with such images as those of the wheel and the grass, the cult of man in the XIXth century and his vehement regi-

men of individualism take on an almost absurd aspect. Eluard surpasses in such a poem as *Première du Monde* the glorification of the solitary male genius. In his poetry man is no longer looking at himself, for he has begun to contemplate the mysteries and has quite rightfully begun with the mystery of woman. Ezra Pound made once a profoundly prophetic statement when he said: "Our time has overshadowed the mysteries by an overemphasis on the individual." The poetry of Eluard marks a great increase of illumination on an idea which has been subtly growing ever since the hermetic sonnets of Gérard de Nerval, who was perhaps the first of the modern poets (and modern men) to be subjugated by the meaning of woman in somewhat the same way that Eluard makes so explicit. Baudelaire fought and struggled tragically, like one of the damned, against this idea of woman. Nerval seems to have foreseen what Eluard feels: the magic of all the objects of his desire, the all-encompassing realm of magic which woman represents and creates.

Ne peux-tu donc prendre les vagues
Dont les barques sont les amandes
Dans ta paume chaude et câline
Ou dans les boucles de ta tête?

Ne peux-tu prendre les étoiles?
Ecartelée, tu leur ressembles,
Dans leur nid de feu tu demeures
Et ton éclat s'en multiplie.

The next two stanzas of *Première du Monde* pose two questions which are overwhelmingly revelatory. The man asks these questions of the woman (or we might say that the poet asks them of Eve.) The first question: "Can't you hold the waves in the palm of your hand?" signifies woman's possessiveness of all that is unruly and vain, her power of control and the physical supremacy of her being. The second question: "Can't you hold the stars?" is an image of the marvelous in the surrealist tradition. Woman resembles the stars because she is *écartelée*: that is, she is extended on a rack (this is the recurring wheel image of the second stanza) and drawn toward the four opposing directions. She is everywhere in the universe, as the sky is spread out, and she is unique at the same time. She is one being and all beings. Her brilliance is multiple like the myriad fires of the stars, and it comes from a prodigious distance in space and time.

De l'aube baillonnée un seul cri veut jaillir,
 Un soleil tournoyant ruisselle sous l'écorce.
 Il ira se fixer sur tes paupières closes.
 O douce, quand tu dors, la nuit se mêle au jour.

In the final stanza, the dawn is gagged (*l'aube baillonnée*) as the wheels, in the image of the second stanza, were tied together (*les roues toutes nouées*). It is as if the sun were trying to pour out from under the bark or some covering. (*Un soleil tournoyant ruisselle sous l'écorce.*) Then the image is explained when the poet speaks of the sun on the closed eyelids of the woman. During the sleep of the woman, night is joined with day. She is the being synonymous with light, independent of light because she contains it all. *O douce, quand tu dors, la nuit se mêle au jour.* She is like the dawn, bound and gagged; like the wheels of the sun chariot, tied together during her sleep.

In such a poem, it is quite possible to see what surrealist inspiration, largely under the influence of Rimbaud whose methodology in *Les Illuminations* is here appropriated, has been successful in creating. What once was epic drama and historical recital, is now cerebral and psychic. The drama of love is played in the mind. It is lyricism of one moment, a flash of time, that is never over, that is anonymous and universal and hence mythical. The mind appears before itself, filled with the image of woman so resplendent in her nudity that she is all degrees of light: angelic and demonic, carnal and spiritual, unique and universal.

The final poem of the volume, *Capitale de la Douleur*, is appropriately placed at the end because it summarizes the work and the theme, and appropriately entitled: *Celle de toujours, toute* ("She of all time, all"). The poem is the apotheosis of song, the opening out of meaning and deliverance in which we may see more clearly than anywhere else in the book the relationship between man and woman. The other poem I have just analyzed is principally a poem about woman. But now the poet tells us that woman is not the femaleness of his body: *C'est qu'elle n'est pas celle de mon corps*, and that explains why he has to abandon her. He has never boasted of accomplishing absolute union with woman. As the fog through which he has moved, doesn't know whether he passed or not, so woman, in her eternal and all-encompassing principle, is unaware of the passing or the accident of man in her life.

Si je vous dis: "j'ai tout abandonné"
 C'est qu'elle n'est pas celle de mon corps,
 Je ne m'en suis jamais vanté,
 Ce n'est pas vrai
 Et la brume de fond où je me meus
 Ne sait jamais si j'ai passé.

That is the introduction. In the second stanza, which is the longest part of the poem, the man speaks of woman and proclaims that he is the only one to speak of her, the only one who is surrounded by the mirror of woman. Here is a further notation on the mirror-symbol, where Hérodiade saw herself in Mallarmé's poem, and through which Orpheus passed in Cocteau's play, and through which every poet must pass as into the ocean, into the principle of maternity, which may be disguised by the words: ocean, sky, stars, clouds, fog. All of these images of woman recur persistently in this poem, and in others of Eluard. At the end of the stanza, the generosity of woman, her principal characteristic which is so clearly opposed to the selfishness of the male, and which has already been described by the image of limitless light, is translated now by the image of blood: *le sang de la générosité*, with all its multiple meanings of life, sacrifice, birth, sexuality.

L'éventail de sa bouche, le reflet de ses yeux
 Je suis le seul à en parler,
 Je suis le seul qui soit cerné
 Par ce miroir si nul où l'air circule à travers moi
 Et l'air a un visage, un visage aimé,
 Un visage aimant, ton visage,
 A toi qui n'as pas de nom et que les autres ignorent,
 La mer te dit: sur moi, le ciel te dit: sur moi,
 Les astres te devinent, les nuages t'imaginent
 Et le sang répandu aux meilleurs moments,
 Le sang de la générosité
 Te porte avec délices.

The ending of the poem, the final eight lines, is the definition of the poet. He is the singer, the one who sings the joy of singing about woman, whether she is present or absent. This would seem to be the key to the new erotology of Eluard. Woman, by her very existence, suppresses the concept of absence. She also suppresses any meaning we can give to the words: hope, ignorance, oblivion. The mystery of the poet's song is that mystery in which love created him and liberated itself. Creation is freedom. By the fact of his existing, he knows that woman exists and surrounds him at all moments. His principle

is defined by his freedom to move within woman. She is everything that he is, but in a higher degree, and this is set forth in the final line where woman's purity is sung of as being purer than man's.

Je chante la grande joie de te chanter,
 La grande joie de t'avoir ou de ne pas t'avoir,
 La candeur de t'attendre, l'innocence de te connaître,
 O toi qui supprimes l'oubli, l'espoir et l'ignorance,
 Qui supprimes l'absence et qui me mets au monde,
 Je chante pour chanter, je t'aime pour chanter
 Le mystère où l'amour me crée et se délivre.

Tu es pure, tu es encore plus pure que moi-même.

On a very superficial level, on a narrow psychoanalytic level, the particular relationship which man bears to woman, as shown in this poem, might be defined as masochistic. But the meaning seems to me to go much deeper than that. Man is attached to woman, as he is attached to all the mysteries through which his life unfolds. He is attached to woman because he is man and dependent upon her for the event of his life. Eluard's is not the worship of the chivalric poets. They had nothing of the deep sense of tranquility which is the principal character of Eluard's love. The particular suffering of love, generated by the coming together of the Christian concept, the *Agapè*, with the Pagan concept, *Eros*, and which became the drama of love in the Western world from the story of Tristan to the novel of Proust, is not completely absent from the poetry of Eluard, but it is strongly counteracted by a worship of the mystery of love, by a tranquility in the presence of love which seems far more primitive than either Christian or Ancient. Picasso, more than any other single artist in Europe, helped to reveal during the years which just preceded the surrealist movement, the power and the character of primitive or Negro art. Something of the tranquil worshipfulness of woman as a mystery, which Eluard may have first seen in the paintings of Picasso, as well as those of Gauguin, has been carried over into his verse, where there is an abundant song of woman without the harassing agony of sexuality. Love is not for Eluard, as it is for Tristan, the experience and the desire for death; it is rather the sense and meaning and ambience of life.

IV

Appearing more than ten years after *Capitale de la Douleur*, Eluard's volume, *Chanson Complète*, of 1939, has an opening poem,

Nous Sommes, which demonstrates his continued and deepened pre-occupation with the doctrine of love.

The first part of the poem: 24 out of the entire 34 lines are dominated by the motif, *tu vois*, and the category of things which woman sees. In the first category, woman sees such things as the evening fire, the forest, the plain, the snow, the ocean; and almost each one of them is characterized by a brilliant image, such as the evening fire which emerges from its shell: *Tu vois le feu du soir qui sort de sa coquille*. This is the list of immensities and infinities with which woman is so often compared in Eluard's verse. Then we read a kind of second category: more humble and more finite objects: stones, woods, towns, sidewalks, a square where solitude has its statue and where love has a single house. These are the second things seen by woman which have their place and their name within the limitlessness and the namelessness of her vision. Animals are here too, like twins or perfectly resembling brothers who are comprehensible to woman in their destiny of blood sacrifice.

At the end of the categories, a climactic stanza brings back the mirror-symbol of woman, so suitably conclusive to the elaborate litany of her visions. She is one with all the women who preceded her, who come down from their ancient mirror bringing her their youth and faith and especially their illumination which permits her to see secretly the world without herself. Woman sees the universe, but man is myopic. He sees solely himself, or he sees himself in the objects he looks at. The mysterious vision of woman is the key to her sensitivity.

The title of the poem, *Nous sommes*, is explained at the end, where men are described as harvesting their dreams. They are first the workers, the laborers, but they are especially the dreamers and hence the poets. "We are," according to the poet, *Nous sommes*, in relationship to woman who sees, who, sun-like, illumines all. Man is defined by a mystical dependence on woman. He is, when he is with her, when he is sleeping in her or under her shadow. The complete song of man, the *Chanson complète*, which serves as title for this volume of Eluard, is lullaby (*berceuse*), love song and lamentation at death, all so ingeniously composed by man the poet, and all reflecting himself in the mirror which is woman.

The mystery of passion — I have studiously avoided this word until my conclusion of the essay — is a dialectic in which man makes an extraordinary request, but one which is clearly articulated in the most

serious part of the surrealist program. In asking for the experience of passion, he asks for the resolution or the dissolving of the antinomy between the subject and the object, between love and death, between man and woman. It is because of love that the universe is dissonant, and it is also because of love that the universe is still resonant with the most wonderful harmonies that man is able to hear. The world has a kind of weight about it, a heaviness and a materiality; and love is precisely that one force or that one mystery capable of so condensing the world that it becomes weightless, summarized into a few words which have no more weight than the tiniest breath of air, the briefest exhalation from the lips of a man. The power of love is able to convert the material world into an imponderable dream, into as immaterial a reality as hope.

Love is the immediate (Eluard has brilliantly entitled one of his volumes: *La Vie Immédiate*); it is the domain of immanency, and it is described only by its ever-forming images. We can begin to see the distinguished lineage of surrealism, first in the images of Rimbaud (the most important literary background for Eluard), and then behind him in Baudelaire, and so on back through Poe to Coleridge whose imagination was so influenced by *The Monk* of Lewis. Mr. Kenneth Burke is quite right in calling *Kubla Khan* a surrealist masterpiece, which even follows the rule of automatic writing. But more perhaps than in the mystery poems of Coleridge and the Gothic tale of Lewis, a distant example in the English tradition of this contemporary doctrine on love would be found in certain passages of *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë, who in the approved surrealist tradition, had composed her novel at an early age. The heroine of *Wuthering Heights*, Cathy, is hard to describe in ordinary terms of a vibrant and passionate girl. Emily Brontë is more at ease when she compares her to the elements, to the wind and snow on Wuthering Heights, to the moors and crags, to the earth mysteries and the fidelity of supernatural phantoms. When Cathy tries to describe her love for Heathcliff, she does it in terms of the ineffable, of an all possessing spirit in which Heathcliff is absorbed, where his identity is lost in her. She says: "He shall never know how I love him: and that, not because he is handsome, but because he is more myself than I am . . . My love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath . . . I am Heathcliff." (Chapter 9)

After Cathy's sickness, she makes no real effort to recover, but says one day to her servant: "I'm sure I should be myself were I once among the heather on those hills." (Ch. 11 or 12) She represents a

vegetative principle, and dies when prevented from living in accordance with her limitlessness and nature-ness. Heathcliff, dark as a demon and a kind of spirit himself, is the only one to understand this, and he says in speaking of Cathy's husband: "He might as well plant an oak in a flower pot, and expect it to thrive." (Ch. 13) With such images as these, with such a love as Cathy feels for Heathcliff, in the world and beyond the world, with the constant interpenetrating of reality and the supernatural, *Wuthering Heights* is not only the greatest of the Gothic tales, but a surrealist novel as well. Cathy is like the woman compared by Eluard to the grass of the earth or the heather of the moors which bear the footprints of man and then efface them in the duration and the presentness of love.

BOBB DAVIS:

Wake

Calendar sunsets slow
bloodletting the days
saltsand fangring and snow
the white shark goes

white bone between teeth
licking the saltlined hand
long in the landlocked head
and the sudden island

hiding the kidney trail
under the dovetailed spray
hiding the black prints
of the black prince friday

whose sleep disturbs our sleep
as the strange days pass
nightless in the white
wake beyond his kiss

DELMORE SCHWARTZ:

'My Mind to Me a Kingdom Is'

The mind to me a North Pole is,
 Superb the whiteness there I find,
 The glaring snows of consciousness
 Dazzle enough to make me blind,
 Until I see too much, in this
 Resembling James' governess.

* * *

The mind and self in Civil War
 Are locked and wasted, blocked and forced.
 Desire raids the heart once more,
 As scruple counts desire's cost.
 Each day betrays the night's last dream,
 While night confuses sum and seem.

Now Jackson raids the Shenandoah,
 Now ironclads block the Southern coast,
 Sharp England keeps shop, seeking power.
 At Gettysburg both sides are lost.
 From London, Marx computes the cost,
 Young Adams finds it all a bore.

Perfidious Albion hesitates,
 Brady takes death's true photographs.
 Charles Adams' tact transforms the fates,
 Lincoln tells jokes but no one laughs.
 Grant gets drunk as the rocking sea,
 Ulysses sick for his family.

Who pardons the weak who fall asleep?
 Lincoln forgives the Gorgon's commands,
 Procrastinates, and fears to leap,
 Knowing how little he understands.
 The ambiguity of victory
 Is nervous in his learned hands.

Davis defends his friends to the end.
 The Negroes chant in the promised land,
 The Negroes jig at heaven's gates,
 Lincoln explains why he hesitates,
 What right which wrong attack defends,
 And who with what will make amends.

This is the famous Civil War.
 Assassins stop in Baltimore.
 Grant closes in, drunk as a spree,
 Longing for home and family,
 As Lincoln sighs for unity
 Until Booth kills him pointlessly.

* * *

The mind resembles all creation,
 The mind is all things, in a way,
 Deceptive as pure observation,
 Heartbreaking as a tragic play.
 Idle, denial; false, affirmation;
 And vain the heart's imagination
 Unless or if on Judgment Day
 When God says what he has to say.

MORTIMER SLAIMAN:

The Fisher-Man

Green skidded the rumpled sheet of undertow
 marching periwinkled curlicues below
 the sky heated blue. He raised his arms to throw

a damp razor line singing yards into the sea
 serenaded by the ecstasy
 of a balsam gull turning like a key.

Briefly posed, his pole pointed north over a monastic dune
 (cropped like one of St. Benedict's praying at the moon)
 the fisher sent the baited hooks screaming down

into the hairy sea, down deep to where the quiet steel
 whispered to a slanting fish, set for ages to kneel
 its pursèd lips before the dangle of the reel.

Winding slowly, playing with it, from Hyannis
 to Provincetown, the fisher-man caresses
 his line, until the fish flops flounders at his feet
 no eye in the head where the hook had laid its kiss.

GEORGE ANTHONY:

Cage

A cage goes in search of a bird. — Kafka

To be or not to be
 My own perversity,
 Caroled the red-eyed bird
 At dead of noon I heard,

But suddenly turned too still
 As a heart that waits a kill.
 The sun thudded among
 The leaves in drier song.

The creaking cage replied
 To be is to be inside
 The song. Silence moves
 Between parallel loves.

Lost in the country dusk
 An invisible hermit thrush
 Unriddled what the heart
 Dreamed of its caging dark;

Swamp angel fluttering where
 Light left the damp air,
 Tuning a silent wind
 With notes for the suddenly blind.

In double morning light
 The bunting flagged the bright
 Resolves of our new blood
 To believe night mothered God.

While morning in her pools
 Sang naked miracles
 The desperate dry cage
 Closed on its outrage.

Now at each red-eyed hour
 Struggles the string-baffled bird
 And cannot rise to sparrow
 That hops from light to sorrow
 As simply as a word.

My own perversity
 Is simple as a bird
 That sings a chick-a-dee
 To praise our greening lord,

Is as the indigo
 Pride of sacrilege
 That mocks the vertigo
 Fills the limping cage.

For when the grinning cage
 Goes in search of a bird
 Is he not lord, the rage
 of heaven? If the word

Lie drying? If the song
 Hollow in skull-bone
 Be waiting for a tongue
 To call the hermit home?

JOSEPH WARREN BEACH:

And Strangers' Eyes*

What passes between eyes more
 Perhaps
 Than can be lined or contoured
 On your maps,
 More than is syllabled on lips
 Or heard
 In the convoluted shell
 Of a word.

Eyes that are closely shuttered
 Against light,
 Eyes camouflaged with sales-talk
 And lies,
 And eyes unfenced that signal
 Rust and blight —
 Cats' eyes and beetles' eyes
 And lizards' eyes —

And strangers' eyes. Across
 The breakfast bar
 In some spot with a name, Missouri,
 Texas, or
 Would it be Kansas, any woman
 Time and chance
 Set there to hand out coffee,
 With a glance

Whether of recognition
 Or surmise,
 Opening instant passage through
 Your eyes

*This and the following poem are copyrighted by Joseph Warren Beach and will appear in *Involuntary Witness*, a book of his poems to be published in 1950 by the Macmillan Company.

Into that secret coral-fringed
 Lagoon
 Where in your inmost self
 You're most at home.

What passed between you on that beam
 Such sign
 As between traders who have crossed
 The line
 Answers the tendering of
 Minted coin
 Of sterling superscription
 And device,

Peculiar ring of feeling
 And of thought
 Current since William, or since Hengist
 Brought
 Into that island Witana-
 Gemot,
 And with the Mayflower smuggled over
 Plymouth Rock,

Ubiquitous and individual
 As the scent
 Of some familiar herb —
 Horsemint,
 Or anise, rediscovered
 In absinthe
 As its intrinsic and prime
 Element.

By such token kindred spirits
 Are known
 More than identical typing
 Of the blood.
 Transfusions will save lives but leave them,
 Blood and bone,
 Like forest trees without a sun
 To fire the wood,

Or fishes gasping for their watery
 Atmosphere.
 But eyes are windows that let in
 An air
 That immaterial lungs can breathe
 And seems
 To flush even the veins and freshen
 The blood streams.

Sunset Boulevard

Or take this gesture. As the car
 Slows down to red,
 Relaxed as in his shower
 Or his bed,
 With a wide circular sweep
 Of flexing arms
 He draws his hands up, clasps them
 Over his head.

Slick muscles rippling to the timed
 Catch and release
 Proclaim as clearly as the smile
 Tossed to his friends
 The primate in his jungle
 Well as ease
 Though nothing of entelechies
 Or ends.

The high-mast palms in royal
 Stupor nod
 Oblivious of what tune
 The motors grind.
 His hands come down slow-motion for
 The change to green,
 Prehensile digits with
 A touch refined.

Flora and fauna agree Pacific
 Suns are kind.

F. L. OVERCARSH:

The Lighthouse, Face to Face

Religion is almost never considered as a problem in the novels of Virginia Woolf. God is mentioned most often in her first novel, *The Voyage Out*, and there he is dismissed with vindictive comedy. On a ship en route to South America, Mrs. Ambrose frets because she has left her children in England with a nurse. The nurse was "a good woman as they go, but she's determined to make my children pray. So far . . . they think of God as a kind of walrus; but . . . what shall we do if we find them saying the Lord's Prayer when we get home again?" Another character in the novel composes a poem on God, and when he has written twenty lines, "the awful thing was that he'd practically proved the fact that God did exist. . . . He went on to wonder what would happen if God did exist — 'an old gentleman in a beard and a long blue dressing gown, extremely testy and disagreeable as he's bound to be.'"

Doubtless from childhood Virginia Woolf was influenced by Sir Leslie Stephen's religious views (she lived with him until she was twenty-two); and it seems to have been rather assumed that she shared those same views. The positivistic temperament of the author of *Free Thinking and Plain Speaking* and *The Science of Ethics* is, however, not precisely the temperament of the author of the blasphemous passages in Virginia Woolf's first novel. Virginia Woolf shows less the equanimity of the agnostic, the rational moralist, than the vehemence — at times, the near hysteria — of the doubtful atheist. This element in her personality is of considerable importance in appreciating her work.

To the Lighthouse, perhaps her finest novel, has been scantily interpreted, and one finds diverse opinions in reading the few critics who have explained its symbols. Joan Bennett says that the "alternating light and shadow of the Lighthouse beam symbolizes the rhythm of joy and sorrow in human life and the alternating radiance and darkness of even the most intimate human relationships." But David Daiches feels that the Lighthouse is a symbol of the individual, who is at once a unique being and a part of history. To reach the Lighthouse, Daiches says, "is, in a sense, to make contact with the truth outside oneself."

Since the Lighthouse is used as a symbol, it could of course imply many things; but it has, I feel, a single intended essential symbolical meaning. Using the method of Joyce in *Ulysses*, in *To the Lighthouse* Virginia Woolf was writing a novel with the overtones of an epic. The work is an allegory, with possible reference to various literature, but based principally on the Bible.

One of the clearest indications that this was Virginia Woolf's intention in the novel is presented through the dialogue and thoughts of the character Lily Briscoe. Lily is an artist, and throughout the novel she paints a picture. If we interpret Lily's thoughts concerning her methods of painting, as though they were the thoughts of Virginia Woolf in composing *To the Lighthouse*, we are given a clue.

After approximately one third of the novel, Lily "steals a look at her picture," and explains what she is attempting: "She saw the colour burning on a framework of steel; the light of a butterfly's wing lying on the arches of a cathedral." Later, Lily says that her picture must be, on the surface, "beautiful and bright"; "feathery and evanescent." Beneath the surface, however, it "must be clamped together with bolts of iron. It was to be a thing you could ruffle with your breath; and a thing you could not dislodge with a team of horses."

Like Lily's painting, and like much of Virginia Woolf's work, *To the Lighthouse* is "feathery and evanescent" on the surface. The Ramsays, a family of ten, and six guests are spending the summer on an island in the Hebrides. The first section of the novel, "The Window," covers a period of less than twenty-four hours; its two main events are the discussion of a proposed trip to the Lighthouse (a trip which does not take place because of the weather), and a dinner party at which gather the Ramsays and their guests. The middle section of the novel covers a period of ten years, when the Ramsays' house on the island is deserted. We are given a description of the emptiness and decay of the house and garden; and we are told a few facts of what has happened to the Ramsays: among them, that two children and Mrs. Ramsay have died. In the last section, "The Lighthouse," Mr. Ramsay and his remaining family, and two of the Ramsays' original guests return to the island. The novel closes with the trip to the Lighthouse, postponed for ten years, taking place.

This, quite briefly, is the surface story of the novel: the "butterfly's wing." Beneath, lie the arches of a cathedral — the Bible. Mr. Ramsay, in the novel, is an author and a philosopher, and he is represented as an eccentric, irascible egotist. Like the God of Wrath of the Old

Testament, he "required sacrifices"; "he depends upon people's praise"; he is engulfed with the "glories of isolation and austerity"; "he is a tyrant."

Suddenly, at one point in the novel, and for no apparent reason, Mr. Ramsay storms down the *garden*. He "boomed tragically." He shouted, "Some one had blundered!"

"He shivered; he quivered. All his vanity, all his satisfaction in his own splendour, riding fell as a thunderbolt . . . had been shattered." He "flashed through the valley of death, volleyed and thundered . . ."

At this point in the allegory, Adam and Eve have defied God. Two of the characters in the novel, "who wondered why such concealments should be necessary; why he always needed praise," have seen "a thing they had not been meant to see." Mr. Ramsay "glared at them. He glared at them without seeming to see them."

"His eyes glazed with emotion, defiant with tragic intensity, met theirs for a second, and trembled on the verge of recognition; but then, raising his hand . . . as if he begged them to withhold for a moment what he knew to be inevitable . . . he impressed upon them his . . . resentment . . ."

The tree of knowledge of good and evil is represented by a pear tree in the Ramsay garden. Lily Briscoe "always saw, when she thought of Mr. Ramsay's work, a scrubbed kitchen table. It lodged now in the fork of a pear tree . . . a phantom kitchen table, one of those scrubbed board tables . . . whose virtue seems to have been laid bare by years of muscular integrity, which stuck there, its four legs in air." When Lily stands by the tree, "impressions poured in upon her . . . and to follow her thought was like following a voice . . . and the voice was . . . saying without prompting undeniable, everlasting . . . things, so that even the fissures and humps on the bark of the pear tree were irrevocably fixed there for eternity."

Allegorical themes in *To the Lighthouse* do not always take the course which one might expect. The essential elements of the allegory are present in the novel, but they are sprinkled over its pages, and to put them together one must look here and then there. Thus, Eve's disobedience is not directly connected with the pear tree in the garden; it is allegorized when she makes a trip into town with one of the Ramsays' guests, the atheist, "the little atheist," Charles Tansley. And she is disobedient when, in an off moment, she allows Tansley to carry her purse; she is supposed always to carry it herself. ". . . As for her little bag, might he not carry that? No, no, she said, she al-

ways carried *that* herself." When they reach the town, Tansley feels an "extraordinary emotion"; an emotion which had begun in the garden when he had wanted to take her bag and which has been growing all the walk. Later, as he waits for her in the parlor of the little house where she has taken him, he waits "quite impatiently . . . determined to carry her bag . . . when, suddenly, in she came, stood for a moment silent (as if she had been pretending . . . and for a moment let herself be now), stood quite motionless for a moment . . . with stars in her eyes and wind in her hair — He took her bag. 'Good-bye, Elsie,' she said, and they walked up the street, she . . . walking as if she expected to meet some one round the corner . . ."

Frequently in the novel, Virginia Woolf uses names with special reference or meaning. The name "Elsie" is a diminutive for both Alice and Elizabeth, which mean, respectively, "truth," and "consecrated to God." Eve has said good-bye to both.

After her disobedience Mr. Ramsay "bears down" upon Eve; his closeness reveals to her "that something had happened, some one had blundered . . . 'Damn you,' he said. . . . There wasn't the slightest possible chance that they could go to the Lighthouse tomorrow, [he] snapped out irascibly." Another hint that the Lighthouse is a symbol of Paradise is given in the first pages of the novel. Mr. Ramsay, it is said, is "incapable of untruth; never tampered with a fact; never altered a disagreeable word to suit the pleasure or convenience of any mortal being, least of all his own children." His children "should be aware from childhood that life is difficult; facts uncompromising; and the passage to that fabled land . . . one that needs, above all, courage, truth, and the power to endure."

II

The idea, found in much contemporary literature, that in every individual there exist multiple identities recurs in the writing of Virginia Woolf. In *Orlando* (which immediately followed *To the Lighthouse*), she expresses the idea explicitly — but with Orlando's usual hyperbole: "How many different people are there not . . . all having lodgment at one time or another in the human spirit? Some say two thousand and fifty-two." In *To the Lighthouse* itself, Lily Briscoe smiles, at one point, "thinking how many shapes one person might wear." Again, "One wanted fifty pairs of eyes to see with, she reflected. Fifty pairs of eyes were not enough to get round that one woman [Mrs. Ramsay] with, she thought."

Mrs. Ramsay, indeed — like every character in the novel — wears many shapes, at least on the level of allegory. It is she, the mother of eight children, who represents Eve. But, as in much religious literature Eve, the mother of all men, has become identified with Mary, the mother of the Son of God and the son of man, Mrs. Ramsay also represents Mary. We are given one indication of this theme when Lily Briscoe introduces into her painting the figures of Mrs. Ramsay and Mrs. Ramsay's "cherished," "most sensitive" child, James. When someone sees Lily's picture he asks what she wished to indicate by a certain "triangular purple shape." (The triangle is an immemorial symbol of the Trinity.) Lily explains that it is Mrs. Ramsay reading to James. "Mother and child then — objects of universal veneration, and in this case the mother was famous for her beauty — might be reduced, he pondered, to a purple shadow without irreverence." Lily explains that the picture is not of them, or not in his sense. "There were other senses too in which one might reverence them." She did not intend "to disparage a subject which, they agreed, Raphael had treated divinely."

And we are given further evidence of the Mary theme in a scene, at dusk, in which, after she finishes reading a story to James and he is carried out by his nurse, Mrs. Ramsay sits musing and watching the light from the Lighthouse. As she watches the light — and light is perhaps the most usual and ancient symbol of God — she has a vision:

" . . . She felt herself pushing aside the thick leather curtain of a church in Rome. . . . There rose to her lips . . . some exclamation of triumph over life when things came together in this peace, this rest, this eternity; and pausing there she looked out to meet that stroke of the Lighthouse, the long steady stroke, the last of the three, which was her stroke She looked up . . . and met the third stroke and it seemed to her like her own eyes meeting her own eyes There rose . . . off the floor of the mind . . . a mist, a bride She thought, watching it with fascination, hypnotised, as if it were stroking with its silver fingers some sealed vessel in her brain whose bursting would flood her with delight, she had known happiness . . . intense happiness . . . and it rolled in waves of pure lemon which curved and swelled . . . and the ecstasy burst in her eyes and waves of pure delight raced over the floor of her mind and she felt, It is enough! It is enough!"

The three strokes of the Lighthouse symbolize the Trinity: the "long steady stroke, the last of the three," represents the Holy Ghost.

We are given another key to the Mary and Christ symbolism in

the novel's first pages. Because a trip to the Lighthouse has been planned, Mrs. Ramsay gathers together presents for the Lighthouse keeper and his son; she knits on a stocking which is "to be given to the Lighthouse keeper for his little boy." We are invited to draw a parallel between James and the Lighthouse keeper's son when Mrs. Ramsay, repeatedly, measures the stocking against the leg of James; she is knitting this stocking when she has her vision.

In addition to her roles as Eve and Mary, on still another level of allegory, Mrs. Ramsay — as the bride of God — is a symbol of the Roman Catholic Church. Like the Catholic Church she has great "beauty," of which much is said; and in several instances, Lily Briscoe's reaction to Mrs. Ramsay is possibly Virginia Woolf's own reaction to the Church of Rome. Once, after gazing at Mrs. Ramsay for a long time, Lily feels that she has penetrated some "sanctuary."

"Was it wisdom? Was it knowledge? Was it, once more, the deceptiveness of beauty, so that one's perceptions, half way to truth, were tangled in a golden mesh? or did she lock up within her some secret which certainly Lily Briscoe believed people must have for the world to go on at all? . . . She imagined how in the chambers of the mind and heart of the woman . . . were stood, like the treasures in the tombs of kings, tablets bearing sacred inscriptions, which if one could spell them out, would teach one everything, but they would never be offered openly, never made public. [Yet] it was not knowledge but unity that she desired, not inscriptions on tablets, nothing that could be written in any language known to men, but intimacy itself, which is knowledge, she had thought, leaning her head on Mrs. Ramsay's knee.

"Nothing happened. Nothing! Nothing! as she leant her head against Mrs. Ramsay's knee. And yet, she knew knowledge and wisdom were stored up in Mrs. Ramsay's heart." And when Mrs. Ramsay rose, and left Lily alone, "for days there hung about her, as after a dream . . . an august shape; the shape of a dome."

III

The dinner party which takes place near the close of the first section, "The Window," occurs, too, at the exact *center* of the novel: the dinner is a symbolical reenactment of the Last Supper. Although there are ten people in the Ramsay family, and they have six guests, at the dinner — as at the Last Supper — only thirteen people appear.

As she serves the main course to the twelve people at her table, Mrs. Ramsay represents Christ serving his twelve disciples at the Last Supper. She, like Christ, is soon to die.

It is, finally, as a symbol of Christ that Mrs. Ramsay plays her most sustained and important role in the allegory of the novel. And this sudden reversal in sex is another illustration of the sexual ambiguity which reappears in Virginia Woolf's work — which is essential in the theme of *Orlando* (where the hero changes from a man to a woman, reversing Mrs. Ramsay's metamorphosis), and which she expounds, with regard to poetic genius, in *A Room of One's Own*. She probably ascribed to the poetic genius, Christ, the androgynous quality she found in other great poets, particularly Shakespeare.

When she sits down at the table, Mrs. Ramsay thinks, "It's all come to an end." Lily Briscoe looks at her, thinking "how worn she looks . . . and how remote"; and it seems to Lily that Mrs. Ramsay's "weariness had been partly pitying people, and the life in her, *her resolve to live again, had been stirred by pity*." After everyone is seated, and candles are lit, "the faces on both sides of the table were brought nearer by the candle light, and composed . . . into a party round a table Some change at once went through them all . . . and they were conscious of making a party together . . . had their common cause some weight was taken off them; anything might happen"

As Mrs. Ramsay serves the main course, she thinks: "This will celebrate the occasion" And when Lily Briscoe now looks at her, Mrs. Ramsay is no longer worn and remote, but "child-like . . . sitting up there with all her beauty opened again in her She put a spell on them all, by wishing, so simply, so directly, and Lily contrasted that abundance with her own poverty of spirit, and supposed that it was partly that belief . . . in this strange, this terrifying thing, which made Paul . . . sitting at her side, all of a tremor, yet abstract, absorbed, silent." The voices in the room sound to Mrs. Ramsay like voices "at a service in a cathedral. . . . One voice speaking alone, reminded her of men and boys crying out the Latin words of a service in some Roman Catholic cathedral." She had a feeling "of eternity." For "something, she meant, is immune from change, and shines out . . . in the face of the flowing, the fleeting, the spectral, like a ruby" She had a feeling of "peace, of rest. Of such moments, she thought, the thing is made that endures."

The thoughts of Judas at the Last Supper are divided between William Bankes, a scientist who plays the role of Satan in the novel, and his confrere, the atheist Charles Tansley (who tempted Eve).

Banks had not wanted to come to the dinner at all, and when he is seated, he feels uncomfortable: "he felt treacherous, that he could sit by her side and feel nothing for her. . . . Yet . . . he must make himself talk. Unless he were very careful, she would find out this treachery of his; that he did not care a straw for her . . ." Charles Tansley, too, feels isolated and lonely and "extremely uncomfortable." Like Judas, "he wanted somebody to give him a chance of asserting himself." Mrs. Ramsay tries at least to bring him into the conversation; she asks him if he is a "good sailor."

"Mr. Tansley raised a hammer: swung it high in air; but realising, as it descended, that he could not smite that butterfly with such an instrument as this, said only that he had never been sick in his life. But in that one sentence lay compact, like gunpowder, that . . . he had worked his way up entirely himself; that he was proud of it; that he was Charles Tansley — a fact that nobody there seemed to realise; but one of these days every single person would know it. He scowled ahead of him. He could almost pity these mild . . . people, who would be blown sky high . . . by the gunpowder that was in him."

This passage is typical of much of the method in *To the Lighthouse*. Poetic images are introduced to set up vibrations in our memory; to create, as Lily Briscoe says, "echoes." In the "rough and tumble" of the novel, we are supposed to feel what Lily feels in the "rough and tumble of daily life" with the allegorical Ramsays: that "one had constantly a sense of . . . one thing falling where another had fallen, and so setting up an echo which chimed in the air and made it full of vibrations." When it is said that Charles Tansley "raised a hammer," it is a symbolic act; and "in that one sentence lay compact, like gunpowder," the story of Judas' betrayal. Throughout the dinner, in fact, allusion is made to the crucifixion, and before the dinner is over, allegorically, Christ is on the cross. Many of the references which indicate this, however, are so deeply buried and are placed with such delicacy that they are like the pigment on the butterfly's wing of the novel and to attempt to lift them is to come away with only a smudge of dust.

Just before the dinner ends, for example, Mrs. Ramsay feels that her eyes are extraordinarily clear, and that, looking around the table, she unveils "each of these people, and their thoughts and their feelings, without effort like a light stealing under water . . . and the sudden silent trout are all lit up *hanging, trembling*. So she saw them; she heard them; but whatever they said . . . was like the movement of a

trout when, at the same time, one can see the ripple and the gravel, *something to the right, something to the left; and the whole is held together*; for whereas in active life she would be netting and separating one thing from another . . . now she said nothing. For the moment, she *hung suspended*. . . . She let it uphold her and sustain her, this admirable fabric of the masculine intelligence, *which ran up and down, crossed this way and that, like iron girders . . . upholding the world, so that she could trust herself to it utterly, even shut her eyes . . .*”

After the dinner, Mrs. Ramsay goes upstairs, “with an air of secrecy,” to the nursery, the room where her children, James and Cam, sleep. The scene which follows tells how James and Cam are not asleep, because they are quarreling over a huge black boar’s skull which hangs on the wall of the nursery. Cam says that it is a “horrid thing,” and she cannot sleep with it in the room; but James will not allow the skull to be removed. Mrs. Ramsay settles the argument by wrapping her shawl around the skull, so that it is still there and James is pacified, but Cam cannot see it and can go to sleep.

On the level of symbolism, this mildly humorous and tender little scene is a scene of horror. The boar’s skull identifies the room as Golgotha, “the place of the skull.” But Virginia Woolf has also used the familiar concept that the birth of Christ was a death, and his death was birth (as in Eliot’s “Journey of the Magi”) — hence the nursery is the sepulchre. James and Cam, whose initials are “J” and “C,” represent, respectively, the spirits of the human body and mind of Christ. Mrs. Ramsay represents his soul — the soul that mediates between the body and the mind. When Mrs. Ramsay puts James and Cam to sleep, she represents the soul of Christ consigning to death his body and his mind.

After Cam is asleep (. . . “Mrs. Ramsay went on speaking still more monotonously, and more rhythmically and more nonsensically, how she must shut her eyes and go to sleep and dream of mountains and valleys and stars falling . . . ”), and just before he goes to sleep, James asks if they will go to the Lighthouse tomorrow. “No, not tomorrow,” Mrs. Ramsay tells him, “but soon, she promised him; the next fine day. . . . He lay down. She covered him up.”

The black, grotesque skull is a symbol of the form subject to sin and corruption which Christ assumed on earth, and the skull, then, represents Christ on the cross. Though the soul of Christ, which is identified with the soul of God, could, presumably, have worked a

miracle and prevented his crucifixion, for the redemption of man Christ allowed himself to be killed; thus Mrs. Ramsay says that she had "let them nail [the skull] up there"; "it was nailed fast." And when she wraps her shawl (a green shawl, and green is the color of life and immortality) around the black skull (black is the color symbol of sin and death), it is to contrast and to combine the ugliness of the body with the beauty of the soul; and further to symbolize the immortality of the body, as well as of the soul, through the death of Christ. The boar's skull is later used in the novel to indicate the Resurrection.

Nineteen pages after the nursery incident, in the second section of the novel, we are told that "Mr. Ramsay, stumbling along a passage one dark morning, stretched his arms out, but Mrs. Ramsay having died rather suddenly the night before, his arms, though stretched out, remained empty." Mrs. Ramsay's death appears to occur after the Ramsays have left the island; but allegorically "the night before" refers to the night on which the nursery incident takes place. Mrs. Ramsay dies in the nursery scene. (After she puts James and Cam to sleep, she grows "still like a tree which has been tossing and quivering and now, when the breeze falls, settles, leaf by leaf, into quiet. . . . She fell deeper and deeper . . . with her eyes closed.") And all of the concluding pages of the first section can be read as a death dream, in which Mrs. Ramsay, as the soul of Christ, dies and is resurrected. The section ends with Mrs. Ramsay "thinking to herself, Nothing on earth can equal this happiness"

IV

During the ten years of "Time Passes," when the Ramsays are absent from the island, night and day, month and year run shapelessly together. The empty house decays; the garden goes to ruin — the whole island is engulfed in the "pool of Time." Word comes at last that the Ramsays are returning and gradually the house and garden are restored. But the ten years of this section are also, and at once, the period of less than three days when the body of Christ was in the sepulchre. All through the section, the Resurrection of his body, symbolized by the boar's head, takes place.

In the empty house, "loveliness reigned and stillness, and together made the shape of loveliness itself, a form from which life had parted Nothing it seemed could . . . disturb the swaying mantle of silence Only once . . . in the middle of the night with a roar,

with a rupture, as after centuries of quiescence, a rock rends itself from the mountain and hurtles crashing into the valley, one fold of the shawl loosened and swung to and fro. . . . The stroke of the Lighthouse . . . came . . . gliding gently as if it laid its caress and lingered stealthily and looked and came lovingly again. But in the very lull of this loving caress, as the long stroke leant upon the bed, the rock was rent asunder; another fold of the shawl loosened; there it hung, and swayed."

" . . . The house was left; the house was deserted. . . . Idly, aimlessly, the swaying shawl swung to and fro. . . . Only the Lighthouse beam entered the rooms for a moment, sent its sudden stare over bed and wall in the darkness But there was a force working Slowly and painfully . . . some laborious birth seemed to be taking place Then indeed peace had come . . . and whatever the dreamers dreamt holily, dreamt wisely, to confirm Through the open window the voice of the beauty of the world came murmuring"

When the third section, "The Lighthouse," opens, the remaining Ramsay family and two of their original guests have returned to the island. The section covers the period of one morning, from eight o'clock until noon; and throughout the section, Lily Briscoe remains on the lawn in front of the house, painting the picture which she began ten years before and has never finished. While she paints, Mr. Ramsay, James and Cam make the trip, postponed for ten years, to the Lighthouse. The novel ends when they arrive at the Lighthouse, and at that same moment, Lily Briscoe completes her painting.

In this section there is a frequent shift in the use of the characters as symbols, but the shifting symbolism is all perhaps expressive of the mystical conception of the Trinity: the three who are one. At times, Mr. Ramsay represents Christ, and once he shows Lily Briscoe "his bleeding hands, his lacerated heart." At other times, James represents Christ, and, symbolically, it is James who steers the boat to the Lighthouse; yet, Mrs. Ramsay represents Christ, still, or the soul of Christ, and she returns in a vision to Lily Briscoe.

All morning, Lily has had the feeling that everything was happening "for the first time, perhaps for the last time" She recalls Mrs. Ramsay with anguish, and remembers how for days after she heard of Mrs. Ramsay's death, she had thought of her "in all her beauty, raising to her forehead a wreath of white flowers" Suddenly, while Lily is thinking of Mrs. Ramsay, something stirs at the window. A "wave of white" goes over the window. It is Mrs. Ramsay; "it was

part of her perfect goodness"; she "sat there quite simply . . . cast her shadow on the step."

The trip to the Lighthouse symbolizes the Ascension; the boat arrives at the Lighthouse at noon, the time when Christ is supposed to have ascended. With this theme, James and Cam play the same roles they have played in the last scene in which they appeared, the nursery scene: they represent the human body and mind of Christ; the soul is ascended immediately upon the death of the body. It is this symbolism which explains the fact that James and Cam are in rebellion against their father; they resent his "tyranny," and they express their rebellion by not wanting to go to the Lighthouse, so that their father must force them to go. They voice the feelings and thoughts of the merely human Christ, the son of man — unmitigated by the soul of God — who resents the fact that he has been allowed to die.

In this section, Mr. Ramsay is no longer the God of Wrath; he has become the God of Love. Lily says that once, he had been like "a lion seeking whom he could devour" But there had come, at last, a "sudden recovery of . . . interest in ordinary human things . . . when it seemed as if he had shed . . . the hope of sympathy and the desire for praise" On the way to the Lighthouse, Mr. Ramsay sits in the middle of the boat and reads, "as if he were guiding something, or wheedling a large flock of sheep, or pushing his way up and up a single narrow path."

When the boat passes one spot on the water, an old fisherman who makes the trip with them tells them that "Three men were drowned where we are now He had seen them clinging to the mast." As they finally approach the Lighthouse, and it is evident that James has steered a true course, Mr. Ramsay praises him, for the first and only time in his life.

"Well done!"

"Now they could see two men on the Lighthouse, watching them and making ready to meet them."

As the boat reaches the Lighthouse, Lily completes her painting. At several points in the novel, she has mentioned a problem in the composition of the painting. "Move the tree to the middle, she had said." But before she puts the last line on her canvas, she looks once more across the bay. ". . . 'He must have reached it,' said Lily Briscoe For the Lighthouse had become almost invisible, had melted away in a blue haze 'He has landed,' she said aloud. 'It is finished.'"

"... Quickly ... she turned to her canvas. There it was — her picture. Yes, with all its greens and blues, its lines running up and across, its attempt at something. It would be destroyed. But what did that matter? ... With a sudden intensity, as if she saw it clear for a second, she drew a line there, in the centre."

In the last chapter of the Book of Revelation, St. John sees the Holy City, and *In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life*. When he has his revelation, St. John says, *It is done*. And when Lily Briscoe completes her painting, she thinks, "It was done; it was finished. Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision."

V

This brief exegesis attempts to sketch only a part of the salient allegory in *To the Lighthouse*. The novel is astonishingly rich in its implication; when one walks the surface level, there is underfoot a labyrinth of reference — obscured and overlapping — leading to various literatures and periods of history. It is like a phenomenon which interested Virginia Woolf: viewed from an airplane, today, certain portions of England reveal "plainly marked, the scars made by the Britons; by the Romans; by the Elizabethan manor house; and by the plough, when they ploughed the hill to grow wheat in the Napoleonic wars." To see the large design of *To the Lighthouse* one must view it, as it were, from an airplane, or from the distance which an epic requires. To see the intricacy of its design, on the other hand, one must reverse the process and use a magnifying glass. And to realize completely all that the novel affords, one must have a constant double vision: it is a mural painted with the brush of a miniaturist.

Every object, and color, and number used in the novel is a symbol in a meticulously patterned arabesque, all wrought with the incredible precision of a Chinese craftsman. One object which appears frequently is "the window." The first section is called "The Window," because, for one thing, the window is a female symbol and it is Mrs. Ramsay who dominates this section. "The Window" is contrasted with the other major section, "The Lighthouse," titled with a male symbol, and there Mr. Ramsay is the leading figure. The window also has reference to the Biblical "windows of heaven," from which destruction or blessing pour forth. Mrs. Ramsay, as Christ, the symbol of God's earthly blessing, often appears seated in "the window." In "Time Passes," after her death, the window is closed, and butter-

flies patter out their life on the window pane; but after the Resurrection, "through the open window the voice of the beauty of the world came murmuring." The window symbolism is carried through to the very last pages of the novel when the vision of Mrs. Ramsay appears to Lily Briscoe and a "wave of white went over the window pane." A few pages later, as the boat nears Paradise, the Lighthouse, "one could see the windows clearly; a dab of white on one of them . . ."

Mrs. Ramsay is also associated with a fountain — referring to the Biblical "fountain of life" — and with a tree. On the Ramsays' island, every evening there "spurted irregularly, so that one had to watch for it and it was a delight when it came, a fountain of white water . . ." Mrs. Ramsay seems "to pour erect into the air a rain of energy, a column of spray, a . . . fountain and spray of life . . ." The tree symbolism has reference to the cross (in the Bible the cross is a "tree"), to the tree of life in Eden, and the tree of life which St. John saw in the Holy City. And just as Virginia Woolf gives Mrs. Ramsay the preponderant role in *To the Lighthouse*, Lily Briscoe "moves the tree to the middle" of her canvas; the tree in the middle on Calvary was the cross of Christ. Finally, Mrs. Ramsay is identified with a ship, and, as the soul of Christ, she is identified with the boat by means of which the trip is made to the Lighthouse. James was "forced to keep his eye all the time on the sail," and "the sail . . . had become to him like a person whom he knew . . ."

Color symbols are placed in a precise design and used always with the knowledge of their traditional Christian symbolical meaning. Two of the most significant colors in the first section are red, the color of fire and wrath, which is associated with Mr. Ramsay; and purple, the color Christ wore at the crucifixion, which is associated with Mrs. Ramsay. After Mrs. Ramsay's death, there appears "a purplish stain upon the bland surface of the sea as if something had . . . bled, invisibly, beneath."

The colors which dominate "The Lighthouse" — grey, brown, blue, and white — express the message of the New Testament. Grey, in Christian symbolism, is the color of Christ risen, a combination of the black of sin and death and the white of the divine light. Just after Mrs. Ramsay's death, an apparitional ship appears, "ashen-coloured . . . come, gone"; Lily calls out "to that essence which sat by the boat, that abstract one made of her, that woman in grey, as if to abuse her for having gone, and then having gone, come back again."

Though red is Mr. Ramsay's color in the early part of the novel, brown, the color of humility, becomes his color symbol in "The Light-

house." And these two colors, red and brown, the symbols of the old God and the new, are combined in the symbol "reddish-brown." This, in the novel, is another color symbol of Christ, the nexus between the Old and the New Testaments and the old God and the new. The stocking which Mrs. Ramsay knits for the Lighthouse keeper's son is "reddish-brown." And when Mr. Ramsay looks at the flowers in his garden, he only notices "something red, something brown."

As the Ascension takes place, the celestial color, blue, is used frequently, and it appears in conjunction with Mr. Ramsay's color, brown. The boat making its way to the Lighthouse is "a brown spot" in the blue bay. And at the last, blue becomes the color of both the island, as seen from the boat, and of the Lighthouse and boat, seen from the island. The island fades and disappears until nothing is "left but a pale blue censer swinging rhythmically this way and that." And Lily sees the boat and Lighthouse fade away, at last, "in a blue haze." White, the color of divine light, appears on the windows of the Lighthouse, and on the drawing-room window when Mrs. Ramsay's image returns to Lily Briscoe; white, too, is the color of the wreath which Mrs. Ramsay wears after her death.

The single color, however, used more often than any other in the novel is the color which appears most often in the Bible: green. Green is the ancient color symbol of nature and fertility and it represents life everlasting. The shawl which Mrs. Ramsay wears is green; and of course the tree in the center of Lily's painting is green.

There is a network of mystical number symbols in the novel. At the dinner party, for example, a single reference is made to the number "one thousand two hundred and fifty-three"; Mr. Ramsay tries to extract the square root of this number. "That was the number, it seemed, on his watch." The year 1253 marked the end of the last important Crusade, and in the middle of the thirteenth century the Papacy abandoned its attempt to recover Jerusalem. In looking for the square root of 1253, presumably Mr. Ramsay seeks the germ of the collapse of the spirit which motivated the Crusades; 1253, of course, has no perfect square root. But just before he reaches the Lighthouse, Mr. Ramsay "took out his watch. He looked at it attentively; he made, perhaps, some mathematical calculation. At last he said triumphantly: 'Well done!' . . ."

The date of Mrs. Ramsay's dinner party is at once — and at least — the present year, the year thirty A. D., and the year 1253. "There are seventy-six different times all ticking in the mind at once," Virginia Woolf says in *Orlando*. Orlando, indeed, spans three centuries

in one lifetime; in *The Waves* the entire lives of the characters follow the course of the sun from morning until night of a single day. In *To the Lighthouse*, with its numerous parallel- and cross-currents, several periods of time are forced into juxtaposition. As in Bergson's *durée*, past time is present, and periods of Biblical time, of historic time, and periods in the memory of the characters in the novel occur simultaneously with the clock time of the present.¹ In the mind of each character tick many periods and several measures of time; and each character, at each moment, represents a chord of personalities, and — like a chord in one of Bach's three-part Inventions — each character's thought or speech is the momentary unity of distinct melodies and distinct rhythms.

The style of the novel has the same air of random casualness that is characteristic of Virginia Woolf's work. But the novel is ubiquitously a tense fusion of many themes, woven together with excruciating care. An elucidation of all the references and a consideration of all the mingled themes in the work would require a variorum.

For the novel, like its method, and like Virginia Woolf's personality, is filled with paradox. Though Mrs. Ramsay is, perhaps, a symbol of all faiths, there are moments when she expresses denial of faith. In the midst of her vision she asks, "How could any Lord have made this world? . . . There is no reason, order, justice: but suffering, death" She is at once devout and blasphemous: Virginia Woolf is at once an atheist and a prophet.

Her spiritual problem was probably never resolved; elements of a troubled religious consciousness appear in her later work. In *The Waves* — in certain respects a prose version of "The Waste Land" — the hero, though he never speaks, is worshipped by the other characters in the novel. He has the name, and certain qualities, of the last of the Grail Kings, Perceval; both have physical beauty but limited intelligence. Perceval in the novel dies when he falls from a horse in India, and the Grail hero is supposed to have carried the Holy Cup from England to India, where it disappeared. In her last novel, *Between the Acts*, published after Virginia Woolf's suicide, the main-

¹ Mrs. Ramsay is fifty years old (the year of Jubilee) at the time of the dinner party; but, through a particular memory, twenty years are erased from her life and she becomes, approximately, the age at which Christ was crucified. She remains thirty until her death in the nursery scene; then, time is reversed again and in the death dream, one of her children "from having been quite grown up, a moment before . . . became a child again"; and Mrs. Ramsay "became like a girl of twenty." Allegorically, she continues to grow young as the section closes so that when it ends, the soul is at the time of birth.

spring is a pageant given as a religious benefit to install electric *light* in the village church. And there appears in *Between the Acts*, the only character in all of Virginia Woolf's novels who avows a Christian faith. She bears the name of a popular saint — Swithin — and she lives in a household of agnostics. She is nicknamed "Old Flimsy," called "Batty" by the servants, and ridiculed by her family for her faith.

In most of Virginia Woolf's novels characters yearn for a vision of the meaning of life; the vision is denied them and they are left with a feeling of frustration and despair. *To the Lighthouse* voices a vision — though all through the novel clangs the dissonance of Virginia Woolf's spiritual dilemma, and the spiritual dilemma of her age.

HARRY SYLVESTER:

Plaza des Armas: Lima

. . . where the afternoon casts its own metal
into the iron fountain
and the eight iron lions mount each his iron griffon

buzzards settle black in all the most inappropriate places:
the crest of the government palace
and the miter of a stone bishop.

Police details trudge outward over the fountain crosswalks
and cavalry, iron-helmeted, jog past the cathedral
under the iron Pizarro riding an iron horse into an iron sky.

The hill of San Cristobal, cross for crown
and hovels its flying buttresses,
rises over the palace grenadiers' red, white and brass.

This was the way the Iberian conquerors planned
the hearts of all their cities: order, symmetry, permanence:
within the cathedral continue to exist Pizarro's bones
and even (to pious delight) some of his skin . . .

LOUIS PAUWELS:

Beginning*

Translated by Daphne Woodward

Another world will come to birth within him. Then he will hate himself, seeing himself so petty, seeing that all his actions, good or bad, have been scattered haphazardly, all of them, by a drunken sower.

— Luc Dietrich

Someone had lent us a villa on the road from Vence to Nice. From our long windows you can see the tops of the bushes in the ravine, the upward slope of earth — red-brown, grey — on the far side; the ramparts of Saint Paul, the old comic-opera village; dead mountains under a little snow; the sad sky, all blue.

To the right, Saint Paul subsides into a medley of pretentious orange trees, roadhouses and handsome frontages. To the left, the cemetery puts a firm end to it; it advances in triangular formation towards the sea that can be glimpsed, beyond foothills and leafy branches, as a white, shimmering crescent, and that a tiny cloud extinguishes.

Our days are stricken with illness because of the mad crackling of the dry air, because of the mingled scents that make up a smell of fever, because of the landscape, so admirably composed, an exquisite world for statues and tourists. In the evening, however, things come to help us: the wind gets up, passes slowly over our cypress trees, and then, in the air freed now from that thick light, that crackling, that smell, you hear a little brook that trickles down from the hills, from reservoir to reservoir. Wind, and above all water, a sound of fresh water; then we recover our liking for what is within us, you can try to offer yourself your own company.

The day I am to speak of was hazy. Towards noon, the sun emerges from the clouds which split open and immediately close up again. One feels more at ease; my wife takes our daughter for a stroll in the garden and I lean on the windowsill. A moment later comes the motion of the sheep.

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From the scorched cliffs that surround Vence, the road comes down in zigzags. If you lean out of the window, your eye follows a sweeping curve which flattens out in front of the house, begins again opposite the cemetery, and the road suddenly turns in the opposite direction, disappears behind some pine trees. And suddenly, on that road, there wavers a flock of sheep.

First of all there is the peculiarity of real-country animals in these surroundings, and the satisfaction of receiving, here, a sign from the strong life. How grateful I am to those tantalizing sheep! In this countryside, our prison, confederates have appeared at last, and I feel inclined to call my wife so that she too may greet the flock with affection, with gratitude.

But that is neither here nor there. I don't want to get involved in a lot of talk about feelings. Please don't let us cast our hearts away on them, don't let us start decay among the signs.

Well, so they are coming from Vence, billowing towards us. One can see white flakes between the pine branches; shivering whimpers fill the air. Soon, halfway round the bend, the oldest sheep comes dancing in a very diligent manner, rapidly crossing and uncrossing his short, stiff legs, his fleece looking whiter than it really is, because as he advances towards us he is surrounded by blue sky, shining vapours, and the black gloss of the road. An instant, and then the tide surges forward behind him, with a foam of mechanical heads which rub against each other, never-ending undulations in a thousand directions. Trying to bind it all together, a tawny dog wheels, galloping, and whines. At the far side, the shepherd's torso, like that of a swimmer who has stood up to walk ashore, pushing with his thighs through heavy liquid masses, and moving his shoulders to help him advance, while the animals that have thorns in their feet, and the tired lambs, straggle around him, their bodies uneasy with little shudders.

From a distance, it all looks charmingly peaceful, gives promise of repose, but that is an illusion. Some of the sheep stop, turn about and begin to nibble on the brink of the ravine; some dive suddenly, their running gait swinging them back and forward like rocking-horses — flow over the slope of the ravine, climb up again a hundred yards further on, or perhaps don't come up; ten others go to join them, a lump of rock breaks away, slides right across the road; the flock is perpetually fraying out, seeming to come together again, breaking up once more, spreading out, starting off in a circle, wandering aside; one loses sight of a sheep, finds it again, lets twenty more escape; your eyes are soon tired out.

The man comes along slowly, his jacket slung over his shoulder; he doesn't seem at all upset. You can see that part of the time he just lets things go, he wanders on, neglecting the sheep for the moment, gone off into a dream, or into nothing; he is limping, his body seems to shrink; so the dog indulges his adventurous nose and goes off in his turn into dreams of odours as he follows the road — his gaunt spine twitched by shivers of sensual pleasure.

Then, as the sheep draw further and further away, the shepherd calls out. He cries: "*Bélou, Bélou!*" He raises his head, addresses the dog with guttural sounds, but the dog sets to work again, without conviction — dashes down into the ravine, climbs out again at once, leaps from side to side of the road, snaps just short of his charges' legs, barks light-heartedly, and the animals skip for politeness' sake, they don't hurry to catch up with the rest of the flock, they involve themselves in side-tracks.

At other times, however, the man taps his switch against his leg; his eye regains authority in the old grey and brown face; he shouts less loudly, but the "*Bélou!*" comes from within him, it's definite. He suddenly has a broader chest, legs better able to support him between road and sky, a moustache that is a sign of manly strength and not merely a piece of trimming. Then the dog pricks up his ears with a jerk and begins to put fear into the sheep. A violent pulsating movement passing through those rills of wool, they all turn back to swell the great creamy river that surges heavily on between the black and the blue, in that scenic landscape, between the dignified pine trees.

The semblance; in less than a second it is shattered again: frolicsome dog, commonplace shepherd, straggling flock, all has to be started afresh.

When they come level with our house, there is a general dispersal; twelve or fifteen animals take advantage of it to come up to our fence — a low wall, pierced by arched gateways, and decorated with the green leaves of holly and its fruit — red balls that hang down from earthenware jars cemented to the wall. They collect round these jars and tug at the plants, which scratch against their teeth; a second group comes along; everything will soon be eaten up.

The shepherd's knees bend; he glides towards the wall, the nails in his low boots squeaking on the surface of the road, and slashes at the animals, growling at them, while the dog bounds into the ravine. The leading sheep goes on with its dance, a scanty group follows it,

the others drag to right and left, the injured beasts and the lambs in an undulating line a long way behind.

When he has gesticulated against the wall and the devourers have trotted back to their place in the flock, the man looks up at me to apologise. He glances at me for a second only, his very blue eyes half closed, the corners of his mouth turned upwards by long-ingrained irony.

"Dirty brutes," he says.

I am leaning out of this window, breaking thorns off a rose-tree with the tip of my forefinger; one might easily prick oneself; the difficulty of this purposeless job keeps me in countenance. I have smiled; I hear my own voice because it is much clearer than usual:

"Salut."

Then: "*Bélou, Bélou!*" real calling, savage dog, white heads reappear over the brink of the ravine, the stragglers hop along on three legs, a short wave of bleating rises and subsides with convulsive movements amid the flock.

My wife had just come in from the garden, walking on tiptoe,

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with our little girl, almost asleep, sitting in her arms. She came and stood at the window, close beside me, one hand settling the child's nodding head against her shoulder.

The sheep were now going past the cemetery, and before they started round the bend behind the pine trees, just for a moment which seemed to us to last a long time, we saw all the animals pressed together. It may have been an illusion due to the distance, but I don't think so. The thousand fleeces form one unmoving mass. The tawny dog waits to one side, a paw held up. The man is standing squarely in the midst of this block of wool, his arms at his sides, his jacket swinging like a cape from his fine shoulder. Far-off clouds have just melted away, and at that instant the crescent of sea, dulled since morning, lights up with a flash, like a coin flung by way of reward.

STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, CIRCULATION, ETC., REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF CONGRESS OF AUGUST 24, 1912, AS AMENDED BY THE ACTS OF MARCH 3, 1933, and JULY 2, 1946

Of ACCENT, published quarterly at Urbana, Illinois, for October 1, 1949.

State of Illinois

County of Champaign

Before me, a notary public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Kerker Quinn, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the editor and publisher of ACCENT and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership and management of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the act of August 24, 1912, as amended by the acts of March 3, 1933, and July 2, 1946 (section 437, P. L. & R.), to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business manager are: Kerker Quinn, Charles Shattuck, John Schacht, and George Scouffas — all of Box 102, University Station, Urbana, Illinois.

2. That the owners are: Kerker Quinn, Charles Shattuck, John Schacht, and George Scouffas — all of Box 102, University Station, Urbana, Illinois.

3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: None.

4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him.

Kerker Quinn

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 30th day of September, 1949.

Katherine H. Peer, Notary Public

(My commission expires November 8, 1949)